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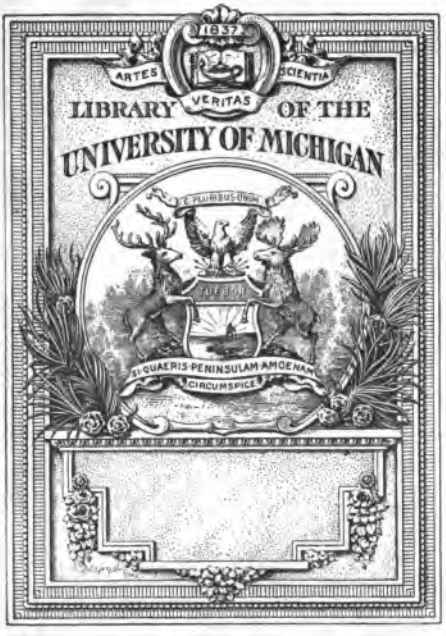
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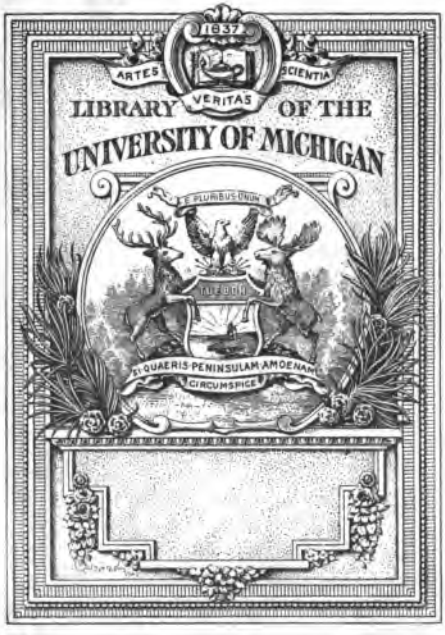
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Faithfully Yours
Charles Dickens

Hurd and Houghton, Publishers, New York.

CHARLES DICKENS:

A SKETCH OF

33833

HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

By F. B. PERKINS.

RESIDENCE—GAD'S HILL.

NEW YORK:
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PREFACE.

In a literary life, there is commonly but very little of incident or adventure; and if the author's books are in some sense equivalent to the soldier's battles, there is this difference, that in the latter case the biographer is usually telling the story of peril, blood, and death to an audience who were not present at the scene; while in the former—at least in the case of a universal favorite like Dickens—in describing or analyzing the works of his subject, he would very likely be talking to people who know more about them than he does himself, and at any rate can readily check him off by a reference to the subject-matter. We none of us saw Waterloo, and Victor Hugo or Captain Siborne have us at their mercy while they give us such a story as they see fit of the terrible hollow way or the final charge of the British line. Everybody has "David Copperfield" or "Martin Chuzzlewit," or can have them:

I have accordingly felt that the less I enlarged upon books in everybody's hands, the wiser I should be.

I have printed a number of extracts from the reviews of thirty and thirty-five years ago, because they seemed to me to present a picture of the young author's first appearance and reception, interesting in itself, new now to most people, and suggesting some rather entertaining views about criticism as well as the subject of it.

No attempt has been made to give an exhaustive or authoritative estimate of Mr. Dickens's works as a literary phenomenon; but it is believed that the few suggestions that are offered will bear examination, and will in some measure serve as hints toward correct opinions about him.

The brief estimate by the eminent French critic, Taine, which has been added as a final chapter, is worth reading, to show what a high authority thinks of a great romancer, how a Frenchman judges an Englishman, and perhaps still more as revealing something of French canons of literary criticism. One of these implied canons has been repeatedly and noisily put forward of late years even in respectable quarters in this country, and it is too great an error not to be referred to here. It is, that art has no business to take morality or reli-

gion into the account. It will be found that one of M. Taine's principal objections to Mr Dickens rests on this proposition. A similar reason can hardly be cited. Morality and religion are true, though a good many Frenchmen may think otherwise, and a few denaturalized Yankees may fancy it smart to propagate at home the French moral disease which they contracted in Paris. The office of art is to represent what is true: morality and religion are true. To omit them from the characters or motives of an English novel of society would be as monstrous an oversight and as fatal to the artistic excellence of the book, as to inject them into a story by Paul de Kock or Ernest Feydeau. The views of M. Taine have the further interest of contradicting those of the condemning clerical critics I have mentioned in my text. M. Taine says that one of Dickens's worst faults was, that he put so much morality and religion in his books. The clergymen in question say that his worst fault was, that there is no religion, but practically an immoral influence, in his books. We may ought to see our overweighted Ivanhoe of [illegible] with the Norman and the Teuton of his [illegible], changing from ethics into [illegible] much like [illegible]

Naturally, some material has been derived from the newspapers. Proper credit, it is believed, has been given. We all know that the best literary talent of the time is said to tend more and more to utter itself in newspapers. To have drawn from such sources is so far a comforting assurance that some of this little book is good for something.

F. B. P.

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CHARLES DICKENS,

HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

CHARLES DICKENS was born in a suburb of the great English naval station of Portsmouth, called Landport, on the 7th of February, 1812, the year of Napoleon's fatal campaign against Russia, and of the beginning of the "War of 1812" between the United States and England. His father, Mr. John Dickens, was a man of intellect and education, and possessed a considerable share of that faculty of observing and delineating character which was so wonderfully developed in his famous son, and which indeed became the most prominent literary trait and most valuable inheritance of the latter. Mr. Dickens senior was employed by the Government in the pay department of the Navy, in some way that required him to reside at different times at Sheerness, Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, or other important naval stations. In the long wars between England and France, from 1792 to 1815, the former power kept a gigantic navy in constant and active service, employing sometimes nine hundred ships and three or four hundred transports, and a hundred and fifty thousand men; and

expending nearly a hundred million dollars a year. In an employment so extensive and multifarious as that of paying off the numberless and heterogeneously varied individuals of this great sea-army with wages and prize-money—a kind of intercourse that comes so closely home to men's business and bosoms, and, like the giving of an exhilarating gas, stirs them into the joyful or angry exhibition of their most natural characters—in such a business as that, Paymaster Dickens could not but see an infinite series of pictures and traits of humanity, good and bad, ludicrous and affecting, simple and shrewd, contemptible and noble. This he actually did, and was accustomed to watch them with a lively interest. After the peace of 1815, being dismissed from office with a pension, he went to London, and apparently from a second coincidence of character with that of his son, obtained employment as a reporter of the Parliamentary debates. All his life long he habitually enjoyed describing the scenes and characters that had come before him during his official life.

It was thus among associations congenial to his own disposition, that the early youth of Charles Dickens was passed; and a nature so extremely and sensitively open as his to impressions from without, and so persistent and perfect in retaining and apprehending them, must necessarily have received much, both of incident and of habit, from this home experience.

Over and above his home training, the boy received nothing of what is usually termed "education," except an ordinary school course, which does

not seem to have even pointed toward any regularly classical or professional studies. As soon as he was old enough he was placed as clerk in an attorney's office. The duties of the position were, however, entirely uncongenial to him. The English "attorney" does not correspond exactly to what we in America call a "lawyer." He is occupied only in the inferior duties of the profession, while the barrister (the more successful of whom become "Sergeants," such as Messrs. Buzfuz and Snubbin) executes whatever requires or is supposed to require the nobler powers of the mind. A moment's recollection will remind every reader of English romance that the men of details, of mere writs and copies and drudgery, and the rascally men of law, are *attorneys*, and not *barristers;* such as Oily Gammon and his partners; Sampson Brass, Dodson & Fogg, etc. In the attorney's office, therefore, is to be encountered the greatest share of whatever is dry, tiresome, and unprofitable, and the greatest risk of whatever is petty, vulgar, dirty, and corrupt in the business of the law. As that business lives entirely on the disputes of human beings, it has a full share of these qualities. And of whatever is most tedious and unprofitable in the office drudgery, the junior clerk is, by virtue of his position, certain to obtain the fullest portion. In the city of London, the busiest and most crowded mass of modern civilization, all the evil side of every human interest, is concentrated and intensified. Of all the law offices in the world, therefore, that of an attorney, and a London attorney, was exactly the place whose occupations

must be most intolerable to a joyous, free, genial, and overflowingly imaginative youth, full of abounding life and activity in body and mind, loving what is kindly and generous and good, hating what is mean and dirty and bad, by natural organization under the necessity of devoting his whole existence to one single task, and held to this necessity by a practically insuperable inability to do well in any other. The boy, therefore, very quickly escaped, and making a long step toward his actual vocation, became a reporter.

His legal experience, short and superficial as it was, was however by no means lost upon him. It is one of the magical powers of genius to receive much from little. Gibbon has told us how even a brief experience as an officer of English militia became a constant and considerable aid in his understanding and description of the military history and battle tactics of the Roman Empire. Scott's similar career as a cavalry volunteer greatly vitalized and verified his many spirited battle-pictures; and even the short office life of our dissatisfied young clerk has left many distinct traces in his works. His delineations of the persons, the office fittings, the documents, the personal and professional manners of the London attorney's office and his clerks, are clear, life-like, full, and detailed even to a microscopic point as compared with those of mercantile counting-houses and warehouses. Observe, for a single instance, the quantity of pictorial representation about the offices of Dodson & Fogg, and Mr. Perker, and on the other hand the scarcity of the same in the

case of the warehouse of Murdstone & Grinby, or the counting-house of Cheeryble Brothers. In the latter cases all the persons necessary for the story are described, and sufficiently described, but with very little of still-life, so to speak, or accessory grouping; whereas the lawyers' offices are described with a gusto, an obvious fulness of apprehension, and even a superfluity of both personages and surroundings.

In "David Copperfield," which is understood to be partly represented or colored from portions of the writer's own experience of life, there is a curiously entertaining and vividly characteristic account of his trials in becoming a competent short-hand reporter—a story which is exactly true to nature, as hundreds of editors and reporters can testify, who have undergone it all. Most characteristic, perhaps, is the difficulty—which probably even the most thoughtful *à priori* analyst would never foresee—of reading what one's own self has written. Dickens, however, quickly vanquished all obstacles, and became a successful newspaper workman, being the swiftest verbatim reporter—and besides this *the best reporter*, which is by no means the same thing—in either House of Parliament. In this particular, Mr. Dickens was very much like the late Henry J. Raymond. The great intellectual powers, and particularly the entire self-command, and extreme readiness, quickness, and certitude of mental action with which such men superadd brain to fingers, lifts them far above the mere reporter-mechanic, and indeed prevents them from remaining reporters very long.

While they follow the speaker word for word, they are supervising and revising him with an intellect very likely every way equal, and, in truth and finish of expression, very likely decidedly superior to his; and as one or another of the invariable slips, stumbles, or carelessnesses of oral delivery streams out of the lightning-like pencil, the brain-reporter cures it, while the mechanical reporter insures it. Mr. Raymond accordingly made the best reports of Mr. Webster's speeches;—it was because they were better than the speeches. Without knowing a single tradition or anecdote bearing on the point, it is necessarily obvious to any experienced newspaper man, that this quality, superadded to his other professional qualities, was what gave the youthful Dickens his success in reporting. His work when "extended" was not only what the speakers had spoken, but it was the same made better, and, in fact, wherever necessary, made good. Like the work of a great portrait painter, this reporter with a genius reproduced all the good of his subject, cured or concealed the defects, "telling the truth in love," and giving to the spectator the best of the subject blended with the best of the artist.

Dickens's first engagement was on the *True Sun*, an ultra-radical newspaper, born amidst the furious contests which marked the era of the Reform Bill of 1832 and the times preceding, in which O'Connell was so prominent, and among whose clouds we can now begin to see, in something like historical perspective, across the distance of a whole generation, not only the vigorous and burly figure of the great

Irish patriot, but many other famous personages, some few still living, but most of them dead. O'Connell himself, Burdett, Brougham, the late Earl of Derby (the "Rupert of Debate," and garnished, moreover, by O'Connell with the bitter nickname of "Scorpion Stanley"), Sir Robert Peel, and many more are gone. Lord John Russell, now Earl Russell, is almost a solitary survivor of the leading parliamentarians of those days of turbulence and peril. The *True Sun* was established by Patrick Grant, was edited after him by Daniel Whittle Harvey, and then by Mr. W. J. Fox. It was rather the expression of partisan views so extreme and angry as to be only temporary in importance or interest, than the permanent and appropriate voice of any great principle or of any large constituency, and it accordingly lasted not many years. Among its staff were, besides young Dickens, his friend Laman Blanchard, that older workman of literature, Leigh Hunt, and perhaps Douglas Jerrold.

The services of the speedy and trustworthy young reporter were, however, soon transferred to a stronger and better paper, the *Morning Chronicle*, also a liberal, but moderately and respectably liberal sheet, upon which were at different times employed many persons well known in other fields of effort. Among these were James Stephen, the lawyer and political writer; David Ricardo, the political economist; William Hazlitt, the critic; Joseph Jekyll, the lawyer and wit; J. Payne Collier, the Shakspearian commentator; Alexander Chalmers, the biographer; and, somewhat later, Henry Mayhew, Shirley Brooks,

G. H. Lewes, and too many more to be named here. At the time of Dickens's accession to its staff, his future father-in-law, Mr. George Hogarth, was also employed upon it. Mr. Hogarth, who had been a lawyer, or, in the local phrase, a "writer to the signet," in Edinburgh, had come to London to live by his talents as a musical composer and a writer, and was now, and for some years afterward, the dramatic and musical critic of the *Chronicle*.

It was during the period of his employment on the *Chronicle* that young Dickens made his first real experiment in his real vocation. Like many another author, however, he had long before composed "certain tragedies achieved at the mature age of eight or ten, and represented with great applause to overflowing nurseries."

How many authors have remembered, and will remember with amusement and sympathy, their own first experience of print, with its odd, poignant little glory of conscious achievement—like a hen's at hatching, or a human mother's with her first baby—when they read the great novelist's own description:

"The magazine in which my first effusion—dropped stealthily one evening at twilight, with fear and trembling, into a dark letter-box, in a dark office, up a dark court, in Fleet-street—appeared in all the glory of print; on which memorable occasion—how well I recollect it!—I walked down to Westminster Hall, and turned into it for half-an-hour, because my eyes were so dimmed with joy and pride that they could not bear the street, and were not fit to be seen there."

This sketch was "Mr. Minns and his Cousin," and the magazine was the *Monthly Magazine*, now-a-days often called the *Old Monthly Magazine*, to distinguish it from its comparatively rather "fast" young competitor, the *New Monthly*, in those days just begun. The *Old Monthly* was really old, too, for a magazine, having been established in 1796, and being therefore now forty years old save one.

Shortly afterward, and during the years 1836 and 1837, the "Sketches by Boz" appeared in the evening edition of the *Chronicle*. Though often reprinted, the author's own statement of the characteristic fancy which selected his well-known signature of "Boz" is better than any other. He says that it was "the nickname of a pet child, a younger brother, whom I had dubbed Moses, in honor of the Vicar of Wakefield, which, being facetiously pronounced through the nose, became Boses, and, being shortened, became Boz. 'Boz' was a very familiar household word to me, long before I was an author, and so I came to adopt it."

One authority—not the best, however—says that it was a little sister who first said Boses, because she could not pronounce it right.

If Dickens had never written anything but the "Sketches by Boz," it is not improbable that they would have been published in two volumes, as they were; but their author would not at present be heard of any oftener, for instance, than the Spaniard, Don Telesforo de Trueba y Cosio, who was a writer of some standing in those days, but of whom nobody knows anything now except people who rummage

through long sets of old magazines. The "Sketches" were, however, at once decidedly successful in London, where they belonged, and at once gave their author a recognized standing among the belles-lettres writers of the city. It is easy to trace in them nearly all the characteristics afterward more strongly developed in the novels—the overflowing fun and humor, and sense of the ridiculous and absurd; the almost preternatural sensibility to points, shades, and peculiarities of character, utterance, appearance, and manners; the ease and full abundance of personation; the astounding quantity of grotesque names and surnames; the kindliness and sympathy, just as ready and just as abundant as the laughter; the entire originality, often verging toward caricature, of the methods of conceiving the thoughts, and of the forms of expressing them; in short, the superabounding and almost riotous wealth of material, the unconscious ease and certainty of management, and the hearty, joyful geniality which bathes the whole. The first series of the "Sketches" was published in two volumes, and was embellished—*really* embellished—with illustrations by George Cruikshank—as great a genius in his art as Dickens in his; and whose modes of expressing thought pictorially might have been created on purpose for an alliance with the new author, so congenial were they in their healthy mirth, sharp, good-natured satire, and wonderful keenness and closeness of characterization. The practical good sense, or the good fortune, which suggested this immediate union of pen and graver, aided greatly in the success of the

"Sketches," and still more so in that of the romances that followed. Indeed, it might almost be assumed that a novel of the men and manners of to-day must be illustrated, and by able hands too, in order to have anything like a full success. The great mass of readers have none too much power of pictorial imagination; what they are to receive with pleasure must be so presented as not to require any effort of thought; and competent pictures afford them exactly the centres of crystallization, so to speak, which they need.

While the "Sketches" were still appearing in the *Chronicle*, or in the *Monthly*, or both, it happened that there was in London a firm of stationers and booksellers, in a small way, by name Messrs. Chapman & Hall. One day a lady, but evidently in necessitous circumstances, entered their shop, and desired Mr. Hall to buy certain designs which she showed him. They were by her husband, she said, Mr. Seymour, the artist; she was Mrs. Seymour; they were in need; and she had been trying to sell these designs, at one place and another, for a few shillings. After some conversation, Mr. Hall paid her some small price for them, and she went away.

When Mr. Chapman came in, Mr. Hall told him about the purchase; and the partners proceeded to consider what they could do with their designs, since they had bought them. They were all, or nearly all, drawings of a sort for which there was in those days a good deal of demand—namely, illustrations of the absurdities and mishaps of Cockneys in search of sport, science, adventures, or the picturesque; and

had been executed by the artist—a man of undoubted ability, but not more gifted than other people with the faculty of getting on in the world—on speculation, for whomsoever would buy. The first conclusion reached was, to procure some text of some kind to be "written up" to the pictures, to be of an amusing character, and to be issued in shilling numbers. The next question was, Who shall write this text? and, on still further consultation, it was decided that the best hand would be the young man, whoever he was—it seems to have been taken for granted that he was young—who was writing the "Sketches by Boz," which were amusing people so much. It is not unlikely that the firm also remembered a comic opera about that time produced, called "The Village Coquettes," whose text was also by the same Boz, and which was fairly successful.

Mr. Dickens has himself recorded the account of the negotiation which ensued, and which resulted in the composition of the "Pickwick Papers." He tells of the pleasant surprise with which he beheld in the visitor a countenance of good augury. "When I opened my door in Furnival's Inn to the managing partner who represented the firm, I recognized in him the person from whose hands I had bought, two or three years previously, and whom I had never seen before or since, my first copy of the magazine in which my first effusion . . . appeared in all the glory of print. . . . I told my visitor of the coincidence, which we both hailed as a good omen; and so fell to business." The proposed "shilling numbers" appear to have been a conception of the

business man; for Mr. Dickens says, they were then "only known to me, or, I believe, to anybody else, by a dim recollection of certain interminable novels in that form, which used to be carried about the country by peddlers, and over some of which I remember to have shed innumerable tears, before I had served my apprenticeship to Life." These "interminable novels" were doubtless "The Romance of the Forest," "The Scottish Chiefs," and other works of the same kind; for, in the days when Dickens was young enough to cry over such books, they and their like used to be sold and delivered serially, in separate numbers, about the country by the "peddlers," or chapmen—personages much like what are in this country at present sufficiently notorious by the more stately designation of "subscription book-agents." Indeed, the same sort of business is carried on in England still, although the books now sold in the serial form are, perhaps, a grade higher in literary merit than they were fifty years ago.

The further conclusion reached, and the sequel, is thus described by Mr. Dickens himself:

"The idea propounded to me was, that the monthly something should be a vehicle for certain plates to be executed by Mr. Seymour; and there was a notion, either on the part of that admirable humorous artist or of my visitor (I forget which), that a 'Nimrod Club,' the members of which were to go out shooting, fishing, and so forth, and getting themselves into difficulties through their want of dexterity, would be the best means of introducing these. I objected, on consideration that although

born and partly bred in the country, I was no great sportsman, except in regard of all kinds of locomotion; that the idea was not novel, and had been already much used; that it would be infinitely better for the plates to arise naturally out of the text; and that I should like to take my own way, with a freer range of English scenes and people, and was afraid I should ultimately do so in any case, whatever course I might prescribe to myself at starting. My views being deferred to, I thought of Mr. Pickwick, and wrote the first number; from the proof-sheets of which, Mr. Seymour made his drawing of the Club, and that happy portrait of the founder by which he is always recognized, and which may be said to have made him a reality. I connected Mr. Pickwick with a club, because of the original suggestion, and I put in Mr. Winkle expressly for the use of Mr. Seymour. We started with a number of twenty-four pages instead of thirty-two, and four illustrations in lieu of a couple. Mr. Seymour's sudden and lamented death, before the second number was published, brought about a quick decision upon a point already in agitation; the number became one of thirty-two pages, with two illustrations, and remained so to the end. My friends told me it was a low, cheap form of publication, by which I should ruin all my rising hopes; and how right my friends turned out to be, everybody now knows."

No apology is necessary for the repetition or particularity used in this mode of recording the process of production of so significant a work as "The Pickwick Papers." The facts are important and interest-

ing, and there has been more or less of confusion, or at least indistinctness, about them; but the present order of occurrence is either given in the words of Mr. Dickens himself, or is accurately the substance of the narrative of those personally cognizant of the facts. First came the preparation of certain designs by Mr. Seymour, to be sold as should be practicable; his wife, after hawking them about for a time, sells them to Chapman & Hall; the firm ask Mr. Dickens to write a text to them; he agrees, not precisely to this, but to write a text, for which Mr. Seymour is to prepare plates; he writes accordingly, and Mr. Seymour at first, and afterward Mr. Hablot K. Browne, illustrate the book. Apparently the only one of the original set of designs sold by Mrs. Seymour which was actually used in the book was that of Mr. Alfred Jingle's intelligent dog Ponto perusing the notice, "Gamekeeper has orders to shoot all dogs found in this enclosure," and declining to enter, while his admiring master, with flint-lock fowling-piece on his shoulder, stares back at him from within the paling. Abundance of comic pictures of this general character are to be found in the light literature of London of those days, and some of them are from time to time sold at the book auctions in New York.

The first number of "The Pickwick Papers," with its memorable picture of Mr. Pickwick addressing the Club, appeared March 1st, 1836. The success of the work was so instant and immense, as at once to mark the power and fix the fame of their youthful author—for he was now only twenty-four years old. His reputation was made as suddenly, based as

firmly maintained as high and as long as those of Scott or Byron. He was at once recognized as a genius of the first rank, and as the series of his works lengthened, they confirmed this reputation until it is no more to be questioned than those of the two great writers just named.

It is interesting and instructive to look back to the old magazines of those times, and compare the utterances of the various supposed organs, or rather directors, of literary opinion—for the critics of thirty years ago were much more lordly and lofty in their deliverances than now. Moreover, this very aid of superiority has become funny by age, if we only stop to consider the relative weight to-day of these nameless scribblers or their yellow, old "back numbers," and of the modern English classic whom they dealt with so patronizingly or so cavalierly. And still further, the agreeable jostling and even internecine contradictoriness of their various verdicts is a profitable spectacle—for they sometimes vetoed or denied or reversed or dissolved or annihilated—whatever the correct technic may be—the judgments of their contemporaries, like so many New York Judges nullifying each others' motions in an important railroad case. However, the voice of the people settled the matter with small heed to the gentlemen of the quill. "Pickwick" became a "rage." Everybody bought it, read it, laughed at it, cried over it, thought it, talked it. It permeated and tinged the whole reading mind of England with a penetrating and positive power, like the magic of a strong chemical reagent; in six months a whole new

chapter was opened in English literature. Though often copied, there is a graphic passage from the *Quarterly Review* of October, 1837, which must be quoted here; for the sake both of the facts it gives and the good sense with which it interprets them. The reviewer says:

"The popularity of this writer is one of the most remarkable literary phenomena of recent times, for it has been fairly earned without resorting to any of the means by which most other writers have succeeded in attracting the attention of their contemporaries. He has flattered no popular prejudice, and profited by no passing folly; he has attempted no caricature sketches of the manners or conversation of the aristocracy; and there are very few political or personal allusions in his works. Moreover, his class of subjects are such as to expose him at the outset to the fatal objection of vulgarity; and with the exception of occasional extracts in the newspapers, he received little or no assistance from the press. Yet, in less than six months from the appearance of the first number of the 'Pickwick Papers,' the whole reading public were talking about them; the names of Winkle, Wardle, Weller, Snodgrass, Dodson & Fogg, had become familiar in our mouths as household words, and Mr. Dickens was the grand object of interest to the whole tribe of 'Leo Hunters,' male and female, of the metropolis. Nay, Pickwick chintzes figured in linen-drapers' windows, and Weller corduroys in breeches-makers' advertisements; Boz cabs might be seen rattling through the [illegible], and the portrait of the author

of 'Pelham,' or 'Crichton,' was scraped down or pasted over, to make room for that of the new popular favorite, in the omnibuses. This is only to be accounted for on the supposition that a fresh vein of humor had been opened; that a new and decidedly original genius had sprung up."

The *Eclectic Review* for March, 1837, testifies unconsciously to the perfect originality of the new phenomenon, by the innocent perplexity of almost its first words. After complimenting the "Sketches," and saying that "the present work will certainly not diminish in reputation—we are much mistaken if it do not add to it," it says, comically enough, "It would be somewhat difficult to determine that precise species of the very extensive genus of fictitious publications to which *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* ought to be referred." Naturally, if the ornithologist discovers a new bird specifically different from any old bird, he will find it hard to assign it to a genus, until he makes the necessary new one for it. *Pickwick* would not range with any known species, because it was an unknown species, not yet classified. This writer goes wandering on in a good-natured, helpless way, but still entirely and amusingly at sea about his genera, and about as much at home as a hen with a brood of young ducks. He complains that there is no plot, or if there is, that it is not adhered to; he says he "presumes" it must be considered a work of fiction, "notwithstanding the gravity with which the title-page assures us that it is a faithful record;" and he gets through with his task by means of a kind of subdued enu-

meration, as if he was afraid of the creature, of such good and bad qualities as he can perceive. He has seized upon the great central quality of all—the transcendent power and truth of Dickens in seeing and reproducing individualities. "His personages impress us with all the force and vividness of reality. They are not described—they are exhibited," he says. Sundry extracts are added, which are judiciously selected; and to conclude, there is a grave admonition—though a very cautious one—more timidly phrased than ever, about the "few instances of profanity," and the "making sport of fanaticism and hypocrisy," which the reviewer terms a "dangerous task," and intimates, very gingerly indeed, that it had better be let alone. The *Eclectic* was a Dissenting magazine, and it was natural enough that it should dislike the pictures of Mr. Stiggins and his brethren and sisters of the Brick Lane Branch; but the reviewer had to be very careful not to put his head into that cap.

Blackwood's Magazine maintained a perfect silence about the new novelist for a number of years. This was no doubt in consequence of the decidedly Liberal politics of Mr. Dickens, and the still more decided Toryism of the great Scotch periodical, which was always unscrupulously injected into all its dealings with literature, without much regard to truth, justice, or decency. However, it was a matter of no consequence, and when, at last, it spoke, it is really of no consequence what it said. An opinion delayed from such motives, and at last expressed from such motives, must necessarily be worthless in

itself. The mere fact of any expression of it becomes the strongest testimony at once to the importance of the subject, and the foolishness of the critic.

Not much attention was paid by the critics to the "Sketches" until the appearance of "Pickwick," when they were frequently noticed together, sometimes with the addition of "Oliver Twist," as in the case of the *Westminster Review*, which, in July, 1837, devoted an article to the new literary luminary. By this time Mr. Bentley, the publisher, sharply on the watch for whatever might promote the prosperity of his *Miscellany*, then just projected, had offered Mr. Dickens its editorship, which he had accepted. The first number of it appeared January 1st, 1837, and in its second number had been commenced "Oliver Twist."

The first paragraph of the *Westminster Review* does justice to the intrinsic merits of the author. The modesty which had decided him to use an *incognito* at his first appearance had been deservedly rewarded by the overpowering success, not of a name, of a prestige, or of an influence—for no new author could have been more utterly destitute of these helps—but of the most genuine excellence, and of excellence most genuinely alone. And this triumph was all the greater in a society so bathed, soaked, ingrained with social prejudice and pride of rank, with regard for influence, and distrust of newcomers, and where even yet literary lords and ladies found that their titles on their title-pages visibly enhanced the mercantile value of their books.

It is true, however, that, as in other cases of such

anonymous risks, the mystery which, in case of failure, would simply have made the obscurity of the disappearing aspirant darker and more silent, made the celebrity of his success noisier and brighter. All exclaimed, What a great romancer! as loudly as if they had known who it was; and all exclaimed, too, Who is this great romancer? so that the excitement was at least doubled, curiosity and wonder being superadded to admiration and enjoyment. Who is Boz? everybody asked; and when the readily-yielded secret was known, the first discoverers hastened to make what jokes they could of it by saying, Who the Dickens is Boz? and another versified the trifling pun into a quatrain:

> Who the Dickens "Boz" could be,
> Puzzled many a learned elf;
> But time unveiled the mystery,
> And "Boz" appeared as Dickens' self.

The *Westminster Review* begins thus:

"Our readers will not, we imagine, be surprised at finding that the general popularity of the 'Pickwick Papers' induces us to enter on a criticism of their author, more serious than is generally accorded to the anonymous writers of productions given to the world in so very fugitive a form as that in which the whole of them have appeared. That popularity is so extensive, that it would be impossible to give an accurate idea either of the most remarkable writers of the day, or of the taste of the reading public of this country, without noticing works which have perhaps elicited more general and warmer admiration

than any works of fiction which have been published for several years past. It must be observed, too, that this great reputation has been acquired without the aid of any interest excited by the personal notoriety of the author."

Equally friendly and just is the following conclusion, at the close of the discussion:

"The great and extensive popularity of Boz is the result, not of popular caprice, or of popular bad taste, but of great intrinsic powers of mind, from which we augur considerable future excellence," etc.

The *Spectator* said, very aptly putting a number of shrewd points:

"The secret of this extraordinary success is, that he exactly hits the level of the capacity and taste of the mass of readers. He furnishes, too, that commodity which mankind in all ages and countries most eagerly seek for and readily appreciate—amusement. He skims lightly over the surface of men and manners, and takes rapid glances at life in city and suburb, indicating the most striking and obvious characteristics with a ready and spirited pencil, giving a few strokes of comic humor and satire, and a touch of the pathetic, with equal effect, and introducing episodical incidents and tales to add life and interest to the picture. Boz is the Cruikshank of writers."

Fraser's Magazine for April, 1840, began an article on "Dickens and his Works" thus:

"Few writers have risen so rapidly into extensive popularity as Dickens, and that by no mean or unjustifiable pandering to public favor, or the use of

low arts of trickery, puffery, or pretence. Four years ago his name was almost unknown, except in some narrow newspaper circles, and his compositions had not extended beyond ephemeral sketches and essays, which, though shrewd, clever, and amusing, would never have been collected, as they now are, into volumes, but for the speedily-acquired and far-diffused fame of 'Pickwick.'" [This is an error, for at least one series of the "Sketches" had been issued in two volumes before "Pickwick" was suggested.] "Before we pass from these 'Sketches,' we must say that they contain germs of almost every character Boz has since depicted, as well as of his incidents and stories, and that they display the quaint peculiarities of his style. Some of them, indeed, are, we think, better than anything which he has written in his more celebrated performances."

The *Edinburgh Review*, a liberal publication—at least as able and influential a periodical as its Tory townfellow and adversary, *Blackwood*, and certainly more respectable in manners and morals, and a more trustworthy literary tribunal—in its issue for October, 1838, put forth a somewhat elaborate estimate of Mr. Dickens, from which are extracted the following passages, which refer to the author's first four works collectively, and which judge him from them:

"He has put them" (viz., "Sketches," "Pickwick," "Nicholas Nickleby," "Oliver Twist") "forth in a form attractive, it is true, to that vast majority, the *idle* readers, but not one indicative of high literary pretension, or calculated to inspire a belief of probable permanence of reputation. They seem, at first

sight, to be among the most evanescent of the literary *ephemera* of their day—mere humorous specimens of the lightest kind of light reading, expressly calculated to be much sought and soon forgotten; fit companions for the portfolio of caricatures; good nonsense; and nothing more. This is the view which many persons will take of Mr. Dickens's writings; but this is not our deliberate view of them. We think him a very original writer—well entitled to his popularity, and not likely to lose it—and the truest and most spirited delineator of English life, amongst the middle and lower classes, since the days of Smollett and Fielding. He has remarkable powers of observation, and great skill in communicating what he has observed; a keen sense of the ludicrous; exuberant humor; and that mastery in the pathetic which, though it seems opposed to the gift of humor, is often found in conjunction with it. Add to these qualities an unaffected style, fluent, easy, spirited, and terse, a good deal of dramatic power, and great truthfulness and ability in description. We know no other English writer to whom he bears a marked resemblance. He sometimes imitates other writers, such as Fielding, in his introductions, and Washington Irving, in his detached tales; and this exhibits his skill as a parodist. But his own *manner* is very distinct, and comparison with any other would not serve to illustrate and describe it. We would compare him rather with the painter Hogarth. . . . Like Hogarth, he takes a keen and practical view of life—is an able satirist—very successful in depicting the ludicrous side of human

nature, and rendering its follies more apparent by humorous exaggeration—peculiarly skilful in its management of details. . . . . It is fair, in making this comparison, to add, that it does not hold good throughout, and that Mr. Dickens is exempt from two of Hogarth's least agreeable qualities—his cynicism and his coarseness. There is no misanthropy in his satire, and no coarseness in his descriptions—a merit enhanced by the nature of his subjects. His works are chiefly pictures of humble life—frequently of the humblest. The reader is led through scenes of poverty and crime, and all the characters are made to discourse in the appropriate language of their respective classes; and yet we recollect no passage which ought to cause pain to the most sensitive delicacy, if read aloud in female society.

"We have said that his satire was not misanthropic. This is eminently true. One of the qualities we the most admire in him is his comprehensive spirit of humanity, the tendency of his writings to make us practically benevolent—to excite our sympathy in behalf of the aggrieved and suffering in all classes, and especially to those who are most removed from observation. He especially directs our attention to the helpless victims of untoward circumstances, or a vicious system—to the imprisoned debtor—the orphan pauper—the parish apprentice—the juvenile criminal—and to the tyranny which, under the combination of parental neglect with the mercenary brutality of a pedagogue, may be exercised with impunity in schools. His humanity is plain, practical, and manly. It is quite untainted with sentimentality.

There is no mawkish wailing for ideal distresses—no morbid exaggeration of the evils incident to our lot—no disposition to excite unavailing discontent, or to turn our attention from remediable grievances to those which do not admit a remedy. Though he appeals much to our feelings, we can detect no instance in which he has employed the verbiage of spurious philanthropy.

"He is equally exempt from the meretricious cant of spurious philosophy. He never endeavors to mislead our sympathies—to pervert plain notions of right and wrong—to make vice interesting in our eyes, and shake our confidence in those whose conduct is irreproachable, by dwelling on the hollowness of seeming virtue. His vicious characters are just what experience shows the average to be, and what the natural operation of those circumstances to which they have been exposed would lead us to expect. . . .

"Good feeling and sound sense are shown in his application of ridicule. It is never levelled at poverty or misfortune; or at circumstances which can be rendered ludicrous only by their deviation from artificial forms; or by regarding them through the medium of a conventional standard." . . . .

These extracts are none too numerous nor too full for illustrating the force of the impression which Dickens made upon his time, nor for showing what manner of impression it was.

A small addition, moreover, is necessary, to show something of the other side, and also for the not uninteresting purpose of affording means for a judgment upon criticism itself. Thus far the sum of the

opinions has been, with small reservations, favorable. It was favorable, however, "the day after the fair." The critical band did not discover anything; it was the reading public who discovered. The popularity of the "Sketches" was hardly recognized at all by the high and mighty gentlemen of the magazines. But when the "Sketches" had been prosperous in an evening newspaper, then in a morning newspaper, then in a magazine, and then in a book; when thirty thousand copies of "Pickwick" had been sold; when not one, but several, dramatized versions of it had been put on the London stage, and the new writer had actually instilled a new color into actual English life—after all that, it was no very surprising discernment which stimulated one reviewer and another reviewer to earn a few guineas by returning to the public, through a magazine article, the opinions which the public had already formed and given to the writer. The fact is, however, that it is this very quality—their mere reflection of public opinion, their very lack of any intrinsic utterance of their own—which makes these articles available now more than a whole generation after their first appearance, as a means of explaining the nature of the advent which occasioned them. Except the invidious silence of *Blackwood*, little or nothing is visible of any outside motive in this collection of verdicts.

There were some varieties of opinion, of course. Some of these are both instructive and amusing; for they both illustrate the important doctrine of the differences of taste, and show, in a sufficiently entertaining way, how unsafe it is to pin one's faith upon

the utterances of a reviewer. The Reverend Mr Wilbur has recorded his sensations upon perusing the review, in a certain periodical, of a sermon which the worthy clergyman had prepared with much labor, and published with some pardonable confidence. The review was an unfavorable one; but such was the weighty gravity and old experience in its tone, that the mortified parson judged it to have been written by a sage of not less than three hundred years old. It turned out, however, that the writer was in fact a student in college, who had thus revenged himself upon Mr. Wilbur for correcting a certain false quantity in the boy's examination in Latin. There is no trace of any such personal enmity among the reviews of Dickens's works, either now or at any other period; for it is not merely his good fortune, but his merit, to have lived almost or altogether without any properly literary enemies.

The effort to classify the new phenomenon has been already mentioned. Some thought he was most like Fielding; some like Irving; and some, with a wider generalization, conceded him at once a place of his own among the masters, and sought to describe him by analogies with other departments of creative genius—calling him a Cruikshank, a Hogarth, a Teniers. In one instance, an effort was made to prove him an actual plagiarist. The *Quarterly Review* for October, 1837, devotes a number of pages to the laudable purpose of convicting Mr. Dickens of having substantially copied his description of Mr. Weller, senior, from Irving's delineation of the English stage-coachman in the "Sketch Book."

The pineal gland of this similarity is a single sentence. In Irving it is this:

"He has commonly a broad full face, curiously mottled with red, as if the blood had been forced, by hard feeding, into every vessel of the skin."

In Dickens it is this:

"—— and his complexion exhibited that peculiarly mottled combination of colors which is only to be seen in gentlemen of his profession, and underdone roast beef."

It is probable that if Mr. Dickens had omitted the word "mottled," the *Quarterly* would not have italicized those two sentences for identity. And to so italicize them and condemn him, because, being a very accurate observer, he applied to a mottled surface the only proper word to describe it, after another very accurate observer had done the same, is hypercritical. It would never have been done if each had said that the face in question was red. It may, however, be granted that Mr. Dickens admired Irving, and it is perfectly safe to admit further that he may have read Irving's description not long before writing his own; and still further, that Mr. Irving's description did in fact give even tone and color to Mr. Dickens's description. But all this will not establish any charge of plagiarism, on any just principle of criticism nor of evidence, nor on any principle at all, except the undeniable one that he is to be found guilty who cannot prove himself innocent. Such charges have often been made; and other cases where, as in this case, there was certainly a coincidence and probably an unconscious reproduc-

tion, have often been given as cases of actual literary dishonesty. But charity in judging and presumptions in favor of good character and intentions, not against them, are exactly as indispensable for justice in literary criticism as they are in a court of law, or in the Christian religion. The question has a sufficiently broad interest to justify the citation of one parallel case where the coincidence is far more striking, because the reproduction is so much more nearly word for word, and so identical in thought and form, but where nobody ever thought of charging the dishonesty of purpose which constitutes plagiarism, and nobody ever will. Poe, in his "Raven," wrote:

"And the silken, sad, *uncertain* rustling of each *purple curtain*
Thrilled me, filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before."

Mrs. Browning, in "Lady Geraldine's Courtship," wrote:

"With a murmurous stir *uncertain*, in the air, the *purple curtain*
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows."

Here, instead of one single epithet almost as unavoidable under the circumstances as if two different persons had separately described four to be the result of adding two and two, we have identical, 1, metre; 2, rhythm; 3, rhyme; 4, choice of thing described (for the curtain was not necessary); 5, choice of the same two epithets, one of color and the other of metaphorical quality. And in spite of all this concentrated, cumulative, and indeed irresistible evidence, the proof, if honestly estimated, simply shows *reminiscence;* not plagiarism. And in the case of Dickens and Irving, even the reminis-

cence is less distinct, as any one will see who will take the trouble to read the context of the two passages concerned. The truth is, lastly, that most of the charges of plagiarism which have often been made, with supposed proof in specified sentences, are resolvable into either accidental coincidence or unintentional reminiscence. The same is true of coincident musical strains and phrases; and if the fundamental bass of a composition were to be recognized as its radical thought, somewhat as critics have sometimes made abstraction of the *differentia* of two passages in order to get at their real fabric or foundation, the number of original musical compositions would not be very great; hundreds and thousands of them, indeed, would come down to this one succession: the first of the key, the fourth, the fifth, a dominant seventh, and the tonic again. But both artists and authors, like people in general, are a good deal better than some people think. And the critics as a body will never be numbered collectively, *à priori*, on the optimist side.

Besides this actual imputation of wrong-doing, there were of course such merely depreciatory expressions of opinion as resulted from variations of taste or belief. The chief of these were such as came from the organs of the Dissenting religious body. Throughout the whole range of his works, and in the earlier ones quite as distinctly as in the later, Mr. Dickens has discharged the sharpest of his satire upon unworthy ministers of the gospel. In this discrimination he is perfectly right; since in proportion as a profession is more sacred, its abuse

is more deserving of exposure and punishment. But the exponents of clerical vices and pretences in his books have usually been of denominations other than the Church of England. This was natural, for it is undeniable that a coarse and vulgar impostor or pretender in the guise of a minister of the gospel was more likely, and perhaps may still be so, to be outside the Established Church than in it. The Dissenting magazines—as in the case of the *Eclectic* quoted above—were thus the likeliest to object to such characters as Stiggins, and to the whole range of Dickens's pretenders to religion, and they did so accordingly. The *Eclectic*, in the passage already quoted, cautiously admonished the novelist by intimating rather indirectly that he was not competent to deal with holy things, and that in order to be safe from irreverence and perhaps sacrilege, he would do well to avoid all sacred topics and personages. And it is very unlikely that the *Eclectic* would have found any such fault if the person satirized, instead of an ignorant sectarist, had been some perpetrator of a simony, or the pompous and corpulent holder of five or six fat benefices. The *North British Review*, also a Dissenting organ, re-enforces the opposition, but on a different line of attack. It has nothing to say about any danger of irreverent dealings with what is holy, but it charges him with vulgarity, the absence of real religious principle, and of real moral principle too, mere kind and good impulses being, it is asserted, the only substitutes used for them. As a North Briton should do (though it be praising a Cavalier at the expense of the Puritans), the *Review*

instances Scott as a bright contrast to Dickens in these particulars. The paragraphs in question are these:

"The mention of the Waverley Novels, and their broad Scottish dialect, leads unavoidably to the remark that, unlike the author of these matchless productions, Mr. Dickens makes his low characters almost always *vulgar*. . . .

"In the next place, the good characters of Mr. Dickens's novels do not seem to have a wholesome moral tendency. The reason is, that many of them —all the author's favorites—exhibit an excellence flowing from constitution and temperament, and not from the influence of moral or religious motive. They act from impulse, not from principle. They present no struggle of contending passions; they are instinctively incapable of evil; they are, therefore, not constituted like other human beings, and do not feel the force of temptation as it assails our less perfect hearts. It is this that makes them unreal—

'Faultless monsters that the world ne'er saw!'

This is the true meaning of 'the simple heart' which Mr. Dickens so perpetually eulogizes. Indeed, they often degenerate into simpletons, sometimes into mere idiots. . . . Another error is the undue prominence given to good temper and kindness, which are constantly made substitutes for all other virtues, and an atonement for the want of them; while a defect in these good qualities is the signal for instant condemnation and the charge of hypocrisy. It is

unfortunate, also, that Mr. Dickens so frequently represents persons with pretensions to virtue and piety as mere rogues and hypocrites, and never depicts any whose station as clergymen, or reputation for piety, is consistently adorned and verified.... We cannot but sometimes contrast the tone of Mr. Dickens's purely sentimental passages with that of Sir Walter Scott on similar occasions, and the stilted pomp with which the former often parades a flaunting rag of threadbare morality, with the quiet and graceful ease with which the latter points out and enforces a useful lesson."

If it be the question whether Sir Walter Scott be an ideal standard of ethical instruction, ten times as many pious Scotchmen will be found on record against him as for him. If this criterion of moral teachings be applied to novels, what will follow? They must represent, according to it, good characters; and those characters must be orthodox in their goodness; in a word, such as would, on examination, be accepted into the membership of [my] church. With the *odium theologicum* thus crossed upon the *odium criticum*, the race of reviewers would become a band of indescribable miscreants. Mr. Lowell has, with a most bitter sarcasm, represented the critic as a peculiarly offensive kind of bug. The improved breed, however, would combine the mere malodorous disgustfulness of the noxious insect with the venom of a cobra di capello, and the reckless wrath of a hornet. Inquisitors would be mere wet-nurses in comparison to such devilish beings.

All such discussions as these of the *Eclectic* and

North British are entirely beside the mark. They do not touch the real question. That question is this: Are there such people as the novelist draws? and has he drawn them well? Both these questions have been answered in the affirmative by the civilized world for thirty years, so far as Mr. Dickens is concerned. It is not the office of a novel to teach orthodox denominational views, nor even to diffuse true religion, any more than it is the office of a pocket-handkerchief. Handkerchiefs with the Thirty-nine Articles printed on each, or with the Shorter Catechism run serially through each dozen, might perhaps be sold; yet the diffusion of such symbols in such goods is not the business, and would not have built the fortune, of Mr. A. T. Stewart.

It is not necessary, however, to argue the question here in full, interesting as it is. It is part of the present plan, however, to do briefly something that will serve quite as well as a refutation in form, both to set Mr. Dickens right and to show what is the real significance of a body of *ex cathedra* criticism. This something is, to present one or two instances, out of many that might be given, of mutual extinction among the critics; who in various points may fairly enough be taken to nullify each other, no matter how brilliant they were singly; as, according to opticians, two equal beams of perfect sunlight may be, as it were, fired into each other, so as to extinguish each other and produce a darkness.

Mr. Dickens's faults, says the *North British*, are vulgarity, unnaturalness in his personages, and a non-morality that amounts substantially to im-

morality. Among Mr. Dickens's characteristic virtues, says the *Westminster*, are great closeness to nature, and absence of coarseness. And, adds the *Edinburgh*, besides that there is no passage which should cause pain to the most sensitive female delicacy, one of the qualities we most admire in him is (surely not an immoral one, at least, if there is any truth in the New Testament) his comprehensive spirit of humanity, his tendency to make us practically benevolent.

Again (on the point of mere artistic truth and skill, and leaving out the questions of minor or major morals): Mr. Jingle, says the *Westminster*, is absurd and impossible (*because* we never saw him!); and Mr. Pott is the best character in the book. Mr. Jingle, says *Fraser*, is the best preserved character in the book. Dr. Slammer, too, he adds, and other incidental characters, are probable (*because*, again, we have seen such people!); but the "standing characters"—that is, of course, most of all, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller—are absurd. The two Wellers, in particular, says the *Westminster*, are admirable representatives of classes. And, observes the *Edinburgh*, "There are many characters truly excellent. First stand Pickwick and his man Weller."

Even if we dared advance far into such a battle of giants, we need not. Like the little boy at the peep-show, we can pay our penny and please ourselves. The difficulty is, obviously—as it will probably always be where any considerable number of these wise men are compared—to choose which

charmer we will be happy with. It is true, to be sure, that an argument may be made in favor of the method of forming an independent opinion and neglecting the critics; though this method involves the waste of a great quantity of fine writing, and the labor of careful thinking.

This assortment of judgments would not be complete without that of the London *Athenæum*, which greeted "Pickwick" at its first appearance with a characteristic assertion. This paper, giving the only or almost the only wholly contemptuous opinion put forth by any periodical of any pretentions to standing, allowed Mr. Dickens only "cleverness." It said:

"The writer of the periodical which is now before us has great cleverness, but he runs closely on some leading hounds in the humorous pack, and when he gives tongue (perchance a vulgar tongue) he reminds you of the baying of several deep dogs who have gone before. The Papers of the 'Pickwick Club,' in fact, are made up of two pounds of Smollett, three ounces of Sterne, a handful of Hook, a dash of grammatical Pierce Egan—incidents at pleasure, served up with an original sauce piquante."

In the mass of contemporary criticism on "Pickwick," there is one curious omission—that is, it would be curious if the book were first published in 1870. This is, the omission of any objection to the tippling and actual drunkenness which dribbles all over the story. This is certainly one of its least agreeable traits; but it does not seem to have been so much as observed in its day. Even the carping

Dissenters do not say a word about the pineapple rum which was Mr. Stiggins's "particular vanity." The truth is, of course, that tippling was simply universal in England in those days; although the heavy swilling, so usual in good society in the time of the Regency, had in great measure gone by. In the year 1835, the Reverend Heman Humphrey, D. D., President of Amherst College, made a tour in Great Britain, France, and Belgium, of which his account was published in two volumes, 12mo, 1838; and a decidedly intelligent and readable book it is, besides affording many contemporary hints about society, manners, etc., which illustrate points in "Pickwick" in particular. As to this very question of temperance, the good Doctor, who carried credentials from the American Temperance Society to the British and Foreign Temperance Society, devotes thirty-nine horrified pages of mingled moans and mathematics to a detailed exposition of the frightful prevalence of alcoholism amongst all ranks and conditions of men in Great Britain.

This is the proper place to note one other similar piece of accidental testimony to the truthfulness of the descriptions in "Pickwick." It amounts only to this: that the fearful strings of verbal outrage hurled at each other by Messrs. Pott and Slurk, the rival editors of Eatanswill, are probably as little caricature as anything in the book—or, for that matter, in any book. To a reader of this generation, those virulent invectives seem extravagant. But Dr. Humphrey, in his "Tour," while he admits that the English newspapers are edited with much ability,

says, in substance, that the British press is even licentious in its freedom of utterance; that it would be out of the question to coin a term of denunciation more bitter than those which are constantly used with perfect impunity; and that practically there is no restraint to keep the press even within the bounds of reason and public safety. It must have been a pretty free-spoken company of editors who could wear such an appearance to an American. But it is of the newspapers of that very year that Anderson (History of British Journalism, ii., 221, et seq.) speaks, when he says that their style, "although vastly improved upon that of former times, would startle those who are accustomed to the more subdued tone and calmer language of modern newspaper controversy." The London *Times*, in 1835, called Mr. Macaulay "Mr. Babbletongue Macaulay;" and said that another member of parliament borrowed his second name from a gin-shop, which his father must have kept; and it always called the great Irish orator, O'Connell, "the big beggarman." Mr. Disraeli, in answering the *Globe* (in the *Times*) said, that that paper "tosses its head with all the fluttering indignation and affected scorn of an enraged and supercilious waiting-woman;" and another letter in the *Times* calls an obnoxious editor "an obscure animal," and "the thing who concocts the meagre sentences and drivels out the rheumy rhetoric of the *Globe*.' Another letter in the *Times*, a little afterward, contained the following fine specimen of stercoraceous literature: "It is not, then, my passion for notoriety that has induced me to tweak the editor of the *Globe*

by the nose, and to inflict sundry kicks on the baser part of his base person—to make him eat dirt, and his own words, fouler than any filth; but because I wished to show to the world what a miserable poltroon—what a craven dullard—what a literary scarecrow—what a mere thing, stuffed with straw and rubbish," etc. These letters, it should be remembered, were part of the regular political controversies of the paper, and were semi-editorial therefore, and substantially the utterances of the paper—not mere casual contributions. Once more: Mr. Disraeli, in his "Letters of Runnymede," afterward published in a volume, called Lord John Russell "an infinitely small scarabæus—an insect;" Palmerston and Grant, "two sleek and long-tailed rats;" and Lord William Bentinck, "one of those mere lees of debilitated humanity and exhausted nature which the winds periodically waft to the hopeless breezes of their native cliffs," and "a drivelling nabob, of weak and perplexed mind and grovelling spirit." Where the foremost newspaper in the world, and the future Prime Minister of the British Empire, dealt in such gardy-loo rhetoric as that, it is not likely that two enraged, vulgar country editors would fall behind them in desperation or in dirt. Dickens himself was a newspaper man too, and quite as slangy and fluent as was necessary. But he did not exceed the reality in Pott and Slurk—not even he could caricature the controversial editorials of that period. As easily make a black mark on charcoal.

The extent and variety o[illegible]

and comments was for the sake of depicting with some degree of fulness the kind and quantity of excitement produced by the advent into literature of this powerful new luminary. Beyond the Atlantic, the welcome was at least as hearty, and the admiration at least as enthusiastic. In this case, as in abundance of other similar ones, remoteness of situation and consequent freedom from English local prejudices and conventional habits, enabled the American public to rival and often to surpass the English public in appreciating the work of English minds.

The *North American Review* for January, 1843, begins an article upon the "American Notes" with a retrospect that forcibly describes the first American welcome to Boz. It says:

"—— the name of Charles Dickens started into a celebrity, which, for extent and intensity, for its extraordinary influence upon social feelings and even political institutions, and for the strength of favorable regard and even warm personal attachment by which it has been accompanied all over the world, we believe is without a parallel in the history of letters. The demand for the "Pickwick Papers" grew greater and greater with every succeeding number. English gentlemen, travelling on the Continent, left orders to have them forwarded to their address. At home, everybody who could afford his monthly shilling, hurried to pay it on the morning of the publishing day; and with an adroitness for money-making, commonly supposed to mark the American only, boys let out their copies to those who could not afford to buy, at a penny an hour.

"Among readers in the United States, the eagerness to get these papers was to the full as general and intense. They were republished in every form of newspaper, weekly and monthly journal, and close-printed volume; the incessant industry of the metropolitan presses proved hardly equal to supplying the country demand; and long before the adventures of Mr. Pickwick were brought to a conclusion, the name of Charles Dickens was not only a classical name in English literature, but one ever after to be spoken with an affectionate warmth of higher value than the widest lettered renown. . . .

"We had heard intelligent Englishmen express much surprise at the American popularity of Mr. Dickens. They supposed his works were too national in spirit and tendency, too local in their wit and allusions, to be fully enjoyed anywhere out of England; and when they found that his American readers far outnumbered his English, because his works were more widely and cheaply circulated here than at home, they were astonished at so startling and unexpected a fact. The truth is, that Mr. Dickens's peculiar genius is nearly as well understood here as it is in London." . . . .

Another periodical, not perhaps so widely circulated, nor of so high reputation as a critical authority, but certainly not at all inferior to the *North American* in point of ability and trustworthiness—the *Christian Examiner*, in its issue of November, 1839, has an article twelve pages long, very careful and well thought out, being a review of "Oliver Twist

though indirectly testifies to the depth and extent of Dickens's popularity, by assuming its universality and intensity, and going into an elaborate examination of the reasons of it. This paper is signed J. S. D., and is no doubt by that competent and careful scholar John S. Dwight. It is beyond comparison the best single view of Mr. Dickens's abilities and character as a writer, which had appeared up to that time, and it is doubtful whether it has been surpassed since.

The reviewer recognized, first of all, the two chief and greatest of all Mr. Dickens's qualities, his power of vision and of representation; and along with these, the sympathy with what is good and the enmity for what is bad, which give him so sure a hold on the heart:

"As we read along, pleasant amusement deepened into intense and pure emotion; and after these were gone, there remained a substantial product in our hands. Our faith, as well as our knowledge of the world, had grown. We had been seeing worse ideas of human life exposed than had ever entered our thought before, and exposed in such a way that we could still see the evil subordinated to the good, and that there is yet more to be hoped, than to be feared, for man. We had been led through the labyrinths of a great city by a true and wise observer,—one who goes everywhere into the midst of facts, and does not get lost among them; one who dares to look into the rotten parts of the world, and yet forgets not its beauty as a whole, but still has faith enough to love this human nature, whose manners he knows so well." . . . .

"In seeking now what qualities go to the making up of such a work, the first thing that suggests itself is, the writer's astonishing power of observation and description. . . . . This writer's great power, which lies not so much in any ideal invention, as in strong and accurate perception of things as they are, betokens a rare tendency, and one still more rarely favored by our modes of education." . . . . "He is a genius in his way. He sees things with his own eyes. There is fine integrity and healthfulness in his perceptions. Objects make their full impression upon his open senses; he accepts the whole without evasion, and trusts it, inasmuch as it is real; and he paints it to us again in quick, bold, expressive strokes, with a free manner, marred by no misgivings, yet modest. He is as objective as Goethe could desire. It is the *thing* which he gives us, and not *himself*. He is neither egotist nor imitator. Not from works of poetry or romance, from the classics, or critical codes founded upon them, does he take his suggestion and his model, but from his own vivid observations, from what he has seen and lived, and this, too, keeping his own personality in the background, thereby escaping the fault of many of the most genuine writers of the day, the stamp of genius upon whose pages is not enough to reconcile us to their morbid [illegible]. He has the health and many [illegible] of Scott, only not his learning [illegible] past."

The reviewer further up[illegible] new romances, describing

and hitting off the conventionalisms and pretensions of all classes." He adverts to the wonderful abundance of his personages, and to their equally wonderful individuality; to the similarly striking distinctness of his descriptions of things and places; to his abounding and never-failing humor; to his great power in the pathetic; to his genial satire, healthy in tone, and just in purpose and direction; and to his vivid sympathy with what is best in the spirit of the age in which he lives. Thus, although only discussing directly one or two of his works, the clear analysis and accurate judgment of this critic has evolved a quite complete and detailed portrait of his subject.

This discussion of the brilliant opening scene of Mr. Dickens's career needs a few further observations. These refer to a feature in "Pickwick," which has often been commented on, and about which the author himself seems to have, for some reason, avoided any very clear explanation. This is the gradual development within the book itself, from the mere string of comic sketches which was its character at first, to an actual novel, with a framework of events, if not a regular plot, character, and a moral. A number of the early reviews of the book animadvert upon this inconsistency, and with much [illegible]ity and kindness show how incorrect it is, and [illegible] the author might have done better. Mr. Dick[illegible]himself, a little sophistically, in his Preface to [illegible]ickwick," thus deals with the charge:

"It has been observed of Mr. Pickwick that there is a decided change in his character as these pages

proceed, and that he becomes more good and more sensible. I do not think this change will appear forced or unnatural to my readers, if they will reflect that in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man who has anything whimsical about him, generally impress us first, and that it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we usually begin to look below these superficial traits, and to know the better part of him."

That is all very well, but assuredly it is an afterthought. Of all Mr. Dickens's novels, "Pickwick" is incomparably the most spontaneous, the most unconscious, the most unsophisticated. No one who is familiar with his works can fail to observe that "Pickwick" was not written with a purpose, whereas most of the others were. When "Pickwick" was begun, the fact is, that Mr. Dickens did not yet know that he was a novel-writer. "Pickwick" formed of itself as he went on with it; and yielding to his own inspiration with the infallible tact of genius, he let it form. It was this influence—the free working of his own creative power—that developed Mr. Pickwick into a real character, instead of the empty caricature of a sciolist, as it also shaped the whole story round him. It has often been intimated that the book was meant to attack the system of the English courts of law and imprisonment for debt. The internal evidence is to the contrary; as was just said, the book was not written with any purpose except to write the book. It is as absolutely clear of secondary motives as the story of David and Jonathan. It is exactly this perfectly spontaneous, fresh,

open, frank, pictorial, unpremeditated, unconscious quality which renders "Pickwick" in some respects the best of all Mr. Dickens's publications, and even yet the prime favorite of many of his admirers. A certain zealous lover of this joyous, fun-bubbling book has even been heard to assert that it grows yet; that every time he reads it he finds in it—not something he had not seen before, but *something that was not in it before.*

"Pickwick" began to appear March 1st, 1836. "Oliver Twist" was commenced in *Bentley's Miscellany*, February 1, 1837, and was published in book form toward the end of 1838. During much of this time the two stories were written together, part by part, just fast enough to satisfy the requirements of the press. "Pickwick" had carried the world by storm with its inexhaustible laughter. "Oliver Twist," reversing the process, set the world in tears. It was a second unexpected revelation, and showed that the great master of fun was at least as great a master of pathos; that he could also deal with the terrible. Instead of a mere comedian, he stood forth an irresistible governor of three of the strongest elements of humanity, stirring at his will the depths of laughter, of sympathy, of horror. The death-bed of the pauper mother; the sufferings and perils of Oliver; the infamies of the criminal life of London; the inexpressible brutality of Bumble and the poor-house, of Noah Claypole, of Mr. William Sikes, and Fang the scoundrelly police magistrate; the still deeper abomination of Fagin and his thief-school; the murder of Nancy, pursuit and death of Sikes;

the horrors of Fagin's last hours—were a series of pictures so utterly frightful, yet so blazing with the terrible light of their perfect truthfulness—and, moreover, were so astonishingly disclosed, as it were from close beneath the very feet of the readers, as if a trap-door into Tophet had been opened in their very parlor-floor—that the public was actually both frightened and put to a stand on the question of the morality of such disclosures. It was no wonder. In society, if not in the individual, the exposure of its defects is pretty certain to arouse what a wit has called "the virtuous indignation of a guilty conscience;" and the first effort of this particular faculty is pretty likely to be an attempt to divert the charge of evil doing to the person who reveals it, as the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates, having stolen a handkerchief, cried "Stop thief!" with particular zeal. In his Preface to a later edition of "Oliver Twist," Mr. Dickens has very squarely and forcibly answered his critics of this sort. After observing, with satirical emphasis, that the story had been "objected to on high moral grounds in some high moral quarters," he says:

"It was, it seemed, a coarse and shocking circumstance, that some of the characters in these pages are chosen from the most criminal and degraded of London's population; that Sikes is a thief, and Fagin a receiver of stolen goods; that the boys are pickpockets, and the girl is a prostitute."

Mr. Dickens's justification of the means and end of his story is indignant, powerful, and conclusive, equally in justifying the direct and plain-spoken way

in which he exhibited criminal England to respectable England, and in reproving the squeamish, selfish cowardice that would fain ignore the evils it was too indolent or careless to try to cure.

"I have yet to learn," he says, with a broad philosophy as true as it is bold, "that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil. I have always believed this to be a recognized and established truth, laid down by the greatest men the world has ever seen, constantly acted upon by the best and wisest natures, and confirmed by the reason and experience of every thinking mind. I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear, should not serve the purpose of a moral, at least, as well as its froth and cream. Nor did I doubt that there lay festering in Saint Giles's as good materials toward the truth as any to be found in Saint James's."

This line of argument is followed at some length, and with some very apt illustrations and contrasts. These point out that when stories of criminal life do harm, it is not because they are stories of criminal life, but because they tell lies about it, and represent it as good, and not as bad. The truth about crime will exhibit it as the most utterly forlorn and miserable of human conditions. In discussing the subject, Mr. Dickens does skilful justice to the motives of the "Beggar's Opera" and of "Paul Clifford," whose real object, fanciful treatment, and unpractical atmosphere, as he shows, prevent them from working any great positive evil. He could not gracefully,

nor indeed properly, make a direct attack on Mr. Ainsworth, who, in January, 1839, succeeded him as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, and whose infamous devil's gospel of "Jack Sheppard" was then printed in that magazine. But the very silence of the preface to "Oliver Twist" on that really scoundrelly book—which might very well be reckoned the reply of the Fagin school to Oliver Twist's indictment—and the solicitous specification of the two other most prominent English belles-lettres compositions based on criminal life, constitute a very intelligible definition of opinion. Mr. Dickens totally disapproved of the Ainsworth school—the thief-breeding school—of literature. Abundance of cases are on record, and proved by legally valid testimony, where the reading of "Jack Sheppard," or presence at its dramatized representation, has turned reasonably decent boys into thieves and burglars. But nobody, young or old, ever felt or could feel any temptation to a life of crime from reading "Oliver Twist." Even the rollicking, artificial merriment of the Artful Dodger and his chums, does not hide the nastiness of their physical condition, nor the hardship of their slavery to Fagin on one hand, and to the police on the other. And if any man has been inspired to imitate the way of living and dying of Fagin or of Sikes, or any woman the career of Nancy, it has not been heard of, and would not be believed if it had.

The debtors' prison scenes in "Pickwick" were described because the description was naturally part of the story as it grew under its writer's hands; and

the misery of Jingle and Job Trotter, the ruin of the fortunate legatee who was defendant in a proceeding for contempt, and the death of the twenty years' Chancery prisoner, were painted in as pathetic accessories only, and with no other purpose, just as the relapse into good sense of Mrs. Weller on her death-bed, and the ready kindness of her husband, were used in like manner. But there is a detail, a strength, a directness, a distinct feeling of purpose about the pictures of poor-house life in "Oliver Twist," that unavoidably suggests indignation and the intention to expose and reform.

Still more clear is this intentional reformatory purpose visible in "Nicholas Nickleby," which was begun shortly after "Pickwick" was completed, and was issued in shilling numbers. This story did what few novels have ever done; it substantially destroyed an abominable abuse—the cheap Yorkshire schools, of which "Dotheboys Hall" was a representation. There are various pleasures in successful authorship: the consciousness of exerting rare and high powers of mind; of affording pleasure to others; of wielding power over others; of being admired; of being beloved; but very few have been the romancers who have done all those things, and have at the same time advanced the interests of humanity by actually working the destruction of an evil or the establishment of a good. It is often said that Cervantes "laughed away the chivalry of Spain;" although it is questionable whether "Don Quixote" was not the expression, rather than the guide, of the spirit of its age. But there can be no doubt about the influence

of "Nicholas Nickleby" on the Yorkshire schools. In his preface to the recent editions of the book, Mr. Dickens evidently expresses his belief that it was his work that exterminated them. The schoolmasters themselves thought so too, for divers of them threatened lawsuits, proposed assault and battery, and even pretended to remember interviews with the author while he was, under false pretences, gathering materials. None, however, of the threatened revenges were inflicted. Now-a-days, no man need be afraid to expose, in good faith and in a proper manner, any abuse. It is centuries since Voltaire was beaten and Sir John Coventry's nose slit, in return for satire too true to be answered with either reason or wit. These threats were made during the progress of the book; and in the preface issued at its final publication in book-form, the author quietly but boldly affirmed all his charges, and defied all and sundry who might attempt to prove them false. No such attempt was made.

CHAPTER II.

Established Fame.

"Master Humphrey's Clock" was begun in weekly numbers in April, 1840, at three-pence a number; and so great was the author's reputation by this time, that the publishers began to issue it with 40,000 copies, to which they were at once compelled to add 20,000 more. This work as at first designed, was in some sense a failure. It was to have consisted, the author says, "for the most part of detached papers, but was to include one continuous story, to be resumed from time to time, with such indefinite intervals between each period of resumption as might best accord with the exigences and capabilities of the proposed miscellany." To be put off with a "miscellany," here and there beset with fragments of a story, the reading public would not consent. They very quickly showed their impatience for another whole work. They experienced a dissatisfaction, almost as distinct, though not as intense, as that of the Highland chieftain in "Glenfinlas," whose companion had gone out from the solitary hut in bad company, and, instead of coming back whole, was flung down the chimney, one bleeding limb at a time. After three numbers, when, says the author, "I had already been made uneasy

by the desultory character of that work, and when, I believe, my readers had thoroughly participated the feeling," he began a story—"The Old Curiosity Shop," and instantly the work was a delight and a success to both author and readers. After this, "Barnaby Rudge" followed, and then a little piece of the "Clock," enough to preserve the form of things, was appended. In these "Clock" papers it was that Mr. Dickens, at the express solicitation of friends, undertook to revive the delightful memories of "Pickwick," by resurrecting Mr. Pickwick himself and the Wellers. It was scarcely more than their ghosts, however, who came. It is true that they were not such foolish unrealities as the various "spiritualist" communications from great poets and orators, but they were dim and pale enough, and at most were received with respectful politeness. It is not to be wondered at that even Mr. Dickens failed to reanimate his dead. Shakspeare failed to do it. It could be done if the writer could return backward along the years, and replace himself where he was before; not otherwise.

In the "Old Curiosity Shop" was created the character of "Little Nell," the most famous of all the author's pathetic children, and perhaps as famous as any in literature—even as the Mignon of Goethe, a being as pure and good as Nell, though as impassioned as the little English girl is snow-cold. Of both this story, and its successor, "Barnaby Rudge," it is to be observed, that they are not of that class of Mr. Dickens's novels that are written with an extra-literary purpose; they are novels only, and not like-

wise assaults on abuses. "Barnaby Rudge" is one of the author's two historical novels, and shows a respectable degree of power in that department of fiction. But Mr. Dickens's peculiar gift, and his best gift, was not the accumulation and delineation of such items as paint a past period—costume, antiquarian lexicography, archæology generally. These are transitory, and are already dead. There have been great masters in the art of grouping and painting them, no doubt. But the art of this master was in painting the qualities of humanity, not of its costume—the feelings, sentiments, and passions that are everlasting as man. It might therefore have been expected that this part of the work would usurp upon the other in the composition of historical fiction; and so it was accordingly. The ignoblenesses of Miggs and Tappertit, the brutalities of Dennis and Hugh, the gross, stolid obstinacy of old Willetts, the steadfast goodness of Varden, the bright, loving sweetness of Dolly, the misery of the Widow Rudge, the fantastic, innocent vagaries of her crack-brained darling—and we may perhaps add to this catalogue of human qualities those which Grip, the raven, had acquired from human teaching—these are the staple of the story. The formal courtliness of Sir John Chester, the excesses of the riots, the feeble folly of Lord George Gordon, which are as significant as anything historical in the book, have far less of chronology than of psychology about them. Almost the same judgment is correct, it may perhaps be as well to add here, of the "Tale of Two Cities." It is a story of human passions, of misery, crime, guilt,

revenge, heroism, love, and happiness. And if the lack of the properly historical element does not so strongly appear in this novel as in "Barnaby Rudge," the reason is clear: it is, that the period was one that, beyond any other in history, boiled and burned with passion; so that, in fact, the novelist who writes a romance of the French Revolution must, if his story is to seem truthful, write a story of psychology.

In this sketch of the succession of Mr. Dickens's earlier novels, no reference has been made to his biography of Joseph Grimaldi—in his day a celebrity, a personage of much professional ability as a "clown," and not without other merits as a man and a citizen. Grimaldi died in 1837. Mr. Dickens, as a rising author, not afraid of hard work, was induced to prepare this memoir, which was published, in two volumes, in 1840, and which neither increased nor diminished the reputation of the writer, nor, it is believed, of the subject. It is simply a faithfully executed and sufficient biography.

It was during the issue of the "Pickwick Papers" that Dickens married. His wife was the daughter of Mr. George Hogarth, of whom mention has already been made.

By the time that "Barnaby Rudge" was finished, during the year 1841, even the vigorous and enduring frame of the new novelist was sensibly fatigued. No wonder. In six years he had fully established a new department of romance, erecting a reputation which would have remained a lasting one without another word or volume; and had proved himself,

besides his unquestioned supremacy as a novelist, a laborious and able workman in three other departments of literary labor—reporting, editing, and biography. The exertion thus invested was intense as well as enjoyable; for no quality of genius is more invariable than the intensity which marks its activity. No human standard of measurement can estimate the total of labor represented by the twenty volumes or thereabouts which the young man of twenty-nine had produced in six years. The very penmanship of so many pages is no inconsiderable accumulation of labor. The contrivance of all these stories, the adaptation to them of the characters and groups supplied by the mind, the shaping out of plot and dialogue, situation and catastrophe—constitute another far higher and immeasurably greater body of labor; and behind all these was that vast mass of seeing, understanding, and remembering, which may be called the professional training and experience of the author, and which was really the whole of his past life, including both the circumstances of his own home and social position, and the extraordinary series of researches and studies that he was always making into the actualities of the humanity around him.

The mere quantity of labor involved in all this, leaving its quality out of the question, and treating it merely as an enterprise in acquiring and recording knowledge, is something tremendous. The higher mental operations are not less exhausting, but more so, than the lower; and it is not wonderful, but natural, that by this time a vacation was necessary

even to this vividly energetic, swift, and enduring organism.

Mr. Dickens decided upon a visit to America; and, embarking with his wife in January, 1842, he reached Boston on the 22d, went by New York to Baltimore, Washington, and Richmond, then by York, Pa., and Pittsburg, down the Ohio to Cincinnati, Cairo, and St. Louis, thence back to Cincinnati, northward to the Lakes, to Niagara, and down the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec, and thence by Lake Champlain back to New York, from which he re-embarked for England, June 7th.

One principal consideration which decided Mr. Dickens to turn his course to the United States on this vacation tour was, to secure, if possible, the passage of an International Copyright Law, in which he was himself more deeply interested than any other Englishman. Almost nothing is on record, unless it be among his own private papers, of the direction and method of any actual efforts in this direction; but, at any rate, he did not receive any encouragement that such a law could be procured. The fact is quite as discreditable and ungraceful as any of the various injustices that have marked the dealings of England and the United States with each other's literature. It is curious that very soon afterward Mr. Dickens himself, in editing the "Picnic Papers," a compilation published as a contribution toward the support of the family of a deceased literary friend, should have been so ill-advised as to embody in it the whole of Mr. Neal's amusing and spirited "Charcoal Sketches," without any leave

asked, pecuniary acknowledgment to the author, or even any reference to its authorship, except merely a statement that the said sketches, by an American writer, had been included in the collection. So difficult is it, even with the best intentions, to be always consistent.

Upon his return to England, Mr. Dickens published his "American Notes," being his record of experiences and opinions during his tour, and which was received in this country with acclamations of bitter displeasure, whose memory is still green, and whose unreasonableness and violence were smartly parodied in their turn in Messrs. Aytoun & Martin's "Ballads of Bon Gaultier," in the extravagant lines beginning,

"Sneak across the wide Atlantic, worthless London's puling child!"

which are supposed to express the fury of some injured Columbian, conscious of having been atrociously abused by the "child."

To a judicious and fair-minded American who reads the "Notes" now, this passion of anger, while not unintelligible, looks extremely ridiculous. The book is very sprightly and entertaining; it is—what cannot be said of all the narratives of English travels in America, or American travels in England, for that matter—entirely gentlemanly in respect of personalities and social decorum; it is colored distinctly throughout, not with enmity, but with liking and good-nature; in short, considered as a whole it is distinctly friendly and laudatory. One cannot help suspecting that the entire silence of the book upon

the extravagant and over-demonstrative series of entertainments, receptions, and what not, which beset the traveller's feet at every town, may have been an unwelcome surprise and disappointment, and that every manager of a ball, a dinner, or testimonial, finding neither himself nor his festivity so much as hinted at, became therefore an unfriend to the thankless guest. There certainly was a terrible series of these performances, and one which altogether justified the extremely ludicrous caricature of them published a couple of years afterward in "Martin Chuzzlewit." And the fact that nobody could learn from the book that any such transaction had taken place anywhere, is proof of dignity and good sense in the visitor; neither of liking or disliking for the incensers who afterward with such a sudden shifting of parts became the incensed.

Probably our nation, now twenty-eight years older than it was the period is more than a quarter of its whole age as a nation may have then possessed less justness and steadiness of self estimation, and may therefore have been touchier than now about foreign opinions. But doubtless the real origin of the anger was the thorough contempt and disgust which Mr. Dickens expressed so freely, not only for the unutterably nasty American habit of tobacco-chewing, but for three strong, unscrupulous, influential, and noisy American interests: first, slavery; second, the politicians as a class; and third, the newspapers as a whole. The vastest and most venomous of these slavery, is dead, but in those days it is quite certain that by as much as Mr. Dickens was right in

avowing his unbounded hate and horror for slavery, by so much he would surely be hated and abused by its defenders—that is, by the most vociferous and numerically powerful body of public sentiment in the United States. It was only four years before that a pro-slavery mob had murdered Lovejoy at Alton; only a week after Mr. Dickens was at Washington occurred the infamous attempt of the Southern congressmen and their allies to gag and reprimand John Quincy Adams for his splendid fearless advocacy of the right of petition on behalf of the abolitionists. That long, last, enormous wave of diabolical intensification which first broke in the Kansas wars, and finally burst and ebbed back into death in the Rebellion, was steadily and rapidly lifting the level of pro-slavery excitement. Entertaining and expressing the views that he did on the slavery question, Mr. Dickens was just as absolutely certain of furious and uncompromising enmity from the majority of voters in the United States, as he would have been for the same reason of rejection as a candidate at the Cincinnati or the Charleston Convention.

Not content with this, he had dealt forth a reprobation as distinct, if not as extreme, upon the only two other interests that were influential enough—unless the collective sects professing Christianity be excepted—to materially damage his popularity with the public of the United States, and vengeful enough to be sure to do it—the politicians and the newspapers. There is something extremely delightful to a decent citizen in his sarcastic description of the in

workhouses, cheap schools, and prisons. Indeed, it must have been a powerful hand that could have rivalled his gloomy and dreadful pictures of the short-comings of his own nation, a hundred and a thousand fold more unsparing, more sarcastic, more stinging, than his utterances about America. This consideration, obvious enough, seems to have been overlooked by his offended American contemporaries; though doubtless its unconscious operation destroyed the force of whatever reply was attempted. At a later period, the thoughtful and finely-toned minds of Emerson and Hawthorne—not to specify any others—have placed on record a sufficient quantity of delicate and deliberately accurate animadversion upon English traits and English society, to constitute a sufficient answer to or retaliation for the indictment of Mr. Dickens, if such were needed. But those philosophical and clean-hearted students of humanity were as free from any intention to make out a case as Mr. Dickens himself. A passage in the dedication or preface to Mr. Hawthorne's work, "Our Old Home," furnishes a parallel to the case of Mr. Dickens that is worth transcribing. Having set down his deliberate opinions about the English, he was, it appears, found fault with very much as Dickens was; for he says:

"To return to these poor sketches; some of my friends have told me that they evince an asperity of sentiment toward the English people that I ought not to feel, and which it is highly inexpedient to express. The charge surprises me, because, if it be true, I have written from a shallower mood than I

supposed. I seldom come into personal relations with an Englishman without beginning to like him, and feeling my favorable impression wax stronger with the progress of the acquaintance. I never stood in an English crowd without being conscious of hereditary sympathies. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that an American is continually thrown upon his national antagonism by some acrid quality in the moral atmosphere of England. These people think so loftily of themselves, and so contemptuously of everybody else, that it requires more generosity than I possess to keep always in perfectly good humor with them. . . . . It is very possible that I may have said things which a profound observer of national character would hesitate to sanction, though never any, I verily believe, that had not more or less of truth. If they be true, there is no reason in the world why they should not be said. Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America for courtesy's sake or kindness."

It is impossible not to transcribe further a single sentence of the truthful judgments thus reasserted, for the sake of comparison. In speaking of the ante-revolutionary conduct of England toward the colonies, Mr. Hawthorne thus summed up the English: "It has required nothing less than the boorishness, the stolidity, the self-sufficiency, the contemptuous jealousy, the half-sagacity, invariably blind of one eye and often distorted of the other, that characterize this strange people, to compel us to be a great nation in our own right."

In the "Concluding Remarks" of the "Notes,"

Mr. Dickens gives the following as his judgment upon the real character of the Americans: "They are by nature frank, brave, cordial, hospitable, and affectionate. . . . . These qualities are natural, I implicitly believe, to the whole people."

The unfavorable conclusions are in the nature of qualifications of this summary. Really, the "Britisher" is at least as lenient as the American, if these two sweeping generalizations may be taken as specimens; and in fact, unless the politics of 1842 be taken into the account, it is out of the question to understand why the "American Notes" were so angrily received.

The first book that Mr. Dickens wrote after this vacation was "Martin Chuzzlewit," which appeared in numbers in 1843–4, and in which he repeated the dose which he had administered to America, but greatly intensified in pungency and enlarged in quantity. Here he compensated himself pretty fully for his previous abstinence from individualizing, though still he represented classes, and not recognizable persons. And moreover, this deliberate elaborate repetition in this extremely telling form, of the allegations in the "Notes" was a most broad and full avowal that he stood by them all, that he reasserted them all.

Of course the consequence was a pretty lively repetition of the American dissatisfaction, and an immense roar of hearty British laughter, which was unusually justifiable, inasmuch as both the British and the American types of the book were conceived and executed in a spirit scarcely, if at all, inferior to

the brilliant, spontaneous overflowing fun of "Pickwick." For many readers, Mrs. Gamp is a creation at least as enjoyable, not merely as any other of Mr. Dickens's creations, but as any other in the whole realm of fiction.

A writer in *Fraser's Magazine* speaks with plainness of some of the American demonstrations of feeling about the "Notes" and "Chuzzlewit." He observes:

"We will venture to say that none of the multifarious criminals who have fled for refuge to the bosom of the Republic, ever deserved a tenth part of the abuse that was lavished on Dickens. One of our friends happened to be at a theatre at Boston, and witnessed a travestie of *Macbeth*. Into the witches' cauldron were thrown all the most useless things on earth—Pennsylvania bonds, Mexican rifles, etc. etc. Finally, as a *ne plus ultra*, was consigned to the infernal flame 'Dickens's last new work,' amid the applausive laughter of the happy gods.

"This unmerited abuse put the author on his mettle. So he laid the scene of his next novel, "Martin Chuzzlewit," partly in America, in order to show that sensitive young people what he *could* say of them when no friendly recollections bound him to reticence. The exasperation, of course, increased tenfold; and if we may judge from the sentiments of casual statesmen, still continues unabated. We have heard more than one apathetic-looking stranger express a savage desire to 'lick' him the next opportunity. On the former occasion they only licked his shoes. *But, we suppose Dickens would no more*

dream of showing himself in Broadway than Haynau of revisiting London.

"Mrs. Gamp, the virtual heroine of this tale, achieved a tremendous success. The United Kingdom pealed and re-pealed with laughter, though we suspect that the mothers of England looked upon a monthly nurse as too sacred a character to be jested with."

In "Martin Chuzzlewit" alone, there is a sufficient answer to our American anger, were any now needed. It might have been noticed, had men's minds been in those days in a condition fit for calm judgment, that the English scamps and butts in the book are worse than the American. Pecksniff alone, without Jonas Chuzzlewit, is worse than Jefferson Brick, Zephaniah Scadder, and Hannibal Chollop, with their newspaper, swindling, tobacco-spit, and murder-weapons, all heaped into one abomination. But the question needs at the present day only such discussion as may serve for a historical adjustment, not for a controversial demonstration. Even in England, although there was laughter enough over Mrs. Hominy and Mr. Pogram, yet there was immeasurably more over Mrs. Gamp.

In the summer of 1844, "Martin Chuzzlewit" having been completed, Mr. Dickens went with his family to Italy, where he remained for a year, establishing his headquarters at Genoa, and making visits to the principal cities of the peninsula. Returning to London at the end of that time, he proceeded to try the experiment of running a daily newspaper. He collected a brilliant staff of writers, and issued, on

January 21st, 1846, the first number of the *Daily News*, a paper of the liberal politics which had been the chief editor's all his life. Mr. Andrews, in his "History of British Journalism," thus records the result:

"The *Daily News* got a good start in these troublous times. Founded just as the railway mania was on the wane, with Mr. Charles Dickens for its editor, it had passed safely, though not without great danger, through all the incidents of a newspaper infancy —it had been discovered that the brilliant sketching pen of Dickens was not yet blunted enough to be steeped in the gall of political writing—that the steel was too true and too highly tempered to carry the envenomed fluid, which ran off it like limpid water, and made the leading articles simply wishy-washy; so the editor had turned his attention to amusing his readers with the "Sketches from Italy," of which he gave them a column a day. But the new speculation drooped, and its best friends feared for its existence. It was then passed into the hands of Mr. Charles Wentworth Dilke."

This curiously awkward mess of mangled metaphors only succeeds in trying to state—for such phrases and topics can hardly be said to succeed in stating—one of the reasons for the ill success of Mr. Dickens's experiment in newspaper editing. No doubt he was deficient in the brutalities then required for a newspaper writer; but a far more important disability was that of his vocation as a novelist, and the unfitness which that vocation entailed upon him for the sort of writing required in a daily newspaper. As a novelist, he knew how to

make pictures; and painting them at his will, all the English-reading world was sure to be delighted. But the daily leader writer must make, not pictures, but points. He must deal with things, not as he sees them, but as his readers see them. He must speak, not whenever he is ready, but to order, at the moment when the facts are ready. He must not complete a representation, with numerous accessory touches and a free discursive addition of whatever thoughts group and gather in his own mind, but must seize a single idea, state it with exclusive clearness and sharpness, weight it with a few sentences directly apropos, and fling it out. For the novelist, human beings are his centres of interest, and political and politico-economical phenomena are only background or still-life. For the editor, on the contrary, these phenomena are the centres of interest, and if he made use of persons, it was, in those days, more as the cannibals use them—to sprinkle with the blood of his victims the daily banquet which he set for his ferocious customers. It is probable that the genial romancer may have aspired to exemplify a higher style of newspaper work; for assuredly, however sharp and skilful he was in applying lancet and scalpel to social vices, he was not the man to do the bludgeon and brass-knuckle work of London political journalism thirty years ago, and cannot have meant to do it. And besides that he was thus unfitted both by mind and manners for the post, there was the additional consideration that the drudgery of a daily editor's life must necessarily exhaust the whole vitality of any human being whatever; and

that consequently, whenever it occurred to the chief editor of the *Daily News* to write a new novel, or even to sketch a new character, he could not; he had neither time nor strength. Like Samson among the Philistines, he must grind at the mill. Fortunately it was unnecessary for the present giant to carry on the parallel by destroying himself and the edifice of his inimitable exhibitions together, in order to escape from his servitude. Under the better technical skill of its new managers the *News* became successful, influential, and profitable; the novel writer returned to his business; and during the year 1847 and 1848 appeared "Dealings with the Firm of Dombey & Son." This novel was written during a sojourn in Switzerland and France, and the concluding paragraph of its brief preface contains one of those confidential reminiscences which are both interesting as phenomena of an author's experience, and effective in winning the reader to a sense of real personal acquaintance with the writer.

"I began this book," Mr. Dickens says, after an observation upon the character of Mr. Dombey, "by the Lake of Geneva, and went on with it for some months in France. The association between the writing and the place of writing is so strong in my mind, that at this day, although I know every chair in the little midshipman's house, and could swear to every pew in the church in which Florence was married, or to every young gentleman's bedstead in Doctor Blimber's establishment, I yet confusedly imagine Captain Cuttle as secluding himself from Mrs. MacStinger among the mountains of Switzer-

land. Similarly, when I am reminded by any chance of what it was that the waves were always saying, I wander in my fancy for a whole winter night about the streets of Paris—as I really did, with a heavy heart, on the night when my little friend and I parted forever."

"Dombey and Son," like "Martin Chuzzlewit," has what may be called a distinct moral unity, resulting from the shaping of the characters and the story so as to teach a definite moral lesson. In Chuzzlewit, this lesson is the evil of selfishness; and in the combining of this one quality with all the other qualities of so many of the characters, so that it colors both what is good and what is bad in them, very great power and skill are shown. The frightful meanness of Pecksniff, the spite of one of his daughters and the silly frivolity of the other, the almost equally base greeds and hates of Jonas, the sharp, shallow, false cunning of Tigg, the impudent wickedness of the American land-agent, the fleshly brutality of Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Prig, are all modulated to this key-note. Equally so are the energetic and penetrating intellect of old Martin, and the various good qualities which, with that curious indistinctness so common in heroes of novels, are imputed to young Martin rather than shown in him—an indistinctness, probably, that results from the extreme completeness and activity of the combination, as a disk painted with all the primary colors and whirled rapidly, looks white. And the virtues of the book, the perfect disinterestedness of Tom Pinch, the honest kindness of Mrs. Westlock and Mrs. Lupin, the steadfast faith

of Mary Graham, the resolute helpful happiness of Mark Tapley, all keyed upon unselfishness, glow and shine along the story with a Rembrandt-like strength that gives double blackness to the vice contrasted with them.

The place of selfishness in "Martin Chuzzlewit" is occupied by pride in "Dombey and Son;" and although the evil quality is not exhibited in so many phases and persons, yet its power and its unhappy consequences are developed in the frightful strife between the ill-matched Dombey and his wife, with a gloomy intensity that teaches its lesson most effectively. And as in "Chuzzlewit," the loving disinterestedness of some of the characters lends double force by its contrast to the selfishness of others, so in "Dombey," the self-forgetful love of Florence, of Harriet Carker, of Captain Cuttle, of Mr. Toots, and of Susan Nipper, whose sharp tongue and fearless deportment did not hinder her from being every whit as loving and as true as Florence herself—these sweet, bright characters most powerfully throw out in the picture the darkness and misery of hearts and lives like those of Mr. Dombey and Edith.

"Dombey" cannot be ranked as high as "Chuzzlewit," either in construction, humor, characterization, or variety. But the pathetic picture of little Paul is not matched nor approached by anything in the other story, nor by anything in all the other works of the author, save only Little Nell. The two children might have been spiritual twins, so alike were they in childish sweetness, in loveliness, in the sadness of early death. Yet there is no imitation in

Paul; his shrewd, unconscious intellect, the vague, deep thoughtfulness of his little questionings and philosophies, appropriately mark him as the child of parents of great intellectual power, whatever their defects; while the preponderating affectionateness of Little Nell's character equally belongs to her as the grandchild of an old man very loving in his nature, whatever his weaknesses.

The next of Mr. Dickens's great works was "The Personal History of David Copperfield the Younger." This story is supposed to contain paraphrases of experiences in Mr. Dickens's own life; and it is reputed to have been that of all his works which the writer thought the best and loved the most. The passage already quoted from the Preface to "Dombey," shows with what a living interest Mr. Dickens attached himself to his stories; passing into the set of circumstances and the company of the characters, as with a band of mingled friends and enemies, all active and alive, with whom he was dealing in reality. It is said, and is apparently an authentic report, that Hoffmann, the famous German writer of fantastic stories, was so sensitive and so subject to what may be called the objective imagination, that he habitually saw the fanciful beings of whom he wrote, as actual objects, sporting about him, moving among the articles of his table and upon the furniture of his room. This intense projecting of the conceptions of the brain was in fact unhealthy, and doubtless foreshadowed the nervous ailment which terminated Hoffmann's life. The very unusual health and dense elastic strength of muscle and brain fibre

which belonged to Mr. Dickens prevented any of his notions from becoming delusions, or even illusions; and yet he evidently lived among the creations of his brain with a sense of companionship and a feeling of affection far stronger than the mere visioning of the German phantast. The intensity of this feeling in regard to "Copperfield" is evident, not from its expression, but from the restraint of its expression, in the Preface, where the author says:

"I do not find it easy to get sufficiently far away from this book, in the first sensations of having finished it, to refer to it with the composure which this formal heading would seem to require. My interest in it is so recent and strong, and my mind is so divided between pleasure and regret—pleasure in the achievement of a long design, regret in the separation from many companions—that I am in danger of wearying the reader, whom I love, with personal confidences and private emotions. Besides which, all that I could say of the story, to any purpose, I have endeavored to say in it. It would concern the reader little, perhaps, to know how sorrowfully the pen is laid down at the close of a two years' imaginative task; or how an author feels as if he were dismissing some portion of himself into the shadowy world, when a crowd of the creatures of his brain are going from him forever. Yet, I have nothing else to tell; unless, indeed, I were to confess (which might be of less moment still), that no one can ever believe this narrative, in the reading, more than I have believed it in the writing."

The criticisms of Mr. Dickens's successive novels

had by this time ceased to welcome him as a hopeful tyro, to instruct him as a well-meaning but ill-trained aspirant, or to *anathenœumatize* him (as some verbal humorist called the process) as an imitator; and had become simply observations—most frequently by means of comparing the last book with the previous ones—upon a recognized master in literature. It is needless to exemplify this mode of treatment; a single extract from *Fraser's Magazine* for December, 1850, will show how promptly and definitely the autobiographic nature of "David Copperfield" was taken for granted by Englishmen:

"This, the last, is, in our opinion, the best of all the author's fictions. The plot is better contrived, and the interest more sustained, than in any other. Here there is no sickly sentiment, no prolix description, and scarcely a trace of exaggerated passion. The author's taste has become gradually more and more refined; his style has got to be more easy, graceful, and natural. The principal groups are delineated as carefully as ever; but instead of the elaborate Dutch painting to which we had been accustomed in his backgrounds and accessories, we have now a single vigorous touch here and there, which is far more artistic and far more effective. His winds do not howl, nor his seas roar, through whole chapters, as formerly; he has become better acquainted with his readers, and ventures to leave more to their imagination. This is the first time that the hero has been made to tell his own story—a plan which generally insures something like epic unity for the tale. We have several reasons for sug-

gesting that here and there, under the name of David Copperfield, we have been favored with passages from the personal history, adventures, and experiences of Charles Dickens. Indeed, this conclusion is in a manner forced upon us by the peculiar professions selected for the ideal character, who is first a newspaper reporter and then a famous novelist. There is, moreover, an air of reality pervading the whole book, to a degree never attained in any of his previous works, and which cannot be entirely attributed to the mere form of narration. . . . . David Copperfield the Younger was born at Blunderstone, near Yarmouth—there is really a village of that name. We do not know whether Charles Dickens was born there too; at all events, the number and minuteness of the local details indicate an intimate knowledge of, and fondness for, Yarmouth and its neighborhood."

Whatever classification and gradation may be adopted for the works of Dickens, "Copperfield" must be reckoned at least among the best. Both the humorous and the pathetic parts of the book possess the high intensity, sustained power, psychological truthfulness and keeping, that characterize the best works of the master. The hero is as good as any hero, except that the appropriate modesty of a gentleman relating his experiences in the first person makes him necessarily more of a lay-figure than otherwise. At least this rule holds good until we come down to those wonderful personages, Charles O'Malley and Major Goliath O'Grady Gahagan. David Copperfield, however, is at least as good as

Nicholas Nickleby or Martin Chuzzlewit. Agnes is as good a heroine as Florence Dombey or Mary Graham or Madeline Bray or Kate Nickleby. Steerforth and Heep and Littimer are unsurpassed as gentlemanly and vulgar villains. Miss Trotwood is as much like Susan Nipper, a little matured by experience, as it was possible for Dickens to have two characters alike; Barkis is at least as good as Bunsby; the pathetic interest of the story of Emily is fully as deep as that of Alice in "Dombey;" the terrors of the storm and shipwreck are as great as those of the death of Carker or of Quilp, if not equal to the tremendous, sustained, intense horror of the flight and death of the burglar Sikes; and above all, the wondrous qualities of Wilkins Micawber are only equalled—they are not surpassed—by that otherwise incomparable creature, Sairey Gamp.

In 1850, not at all worn out with his work, nor dismayed at his former ill-success in managing a newspaper, Mr. Dickens became the editor of "Household Words." This time there was no failure; the weekly literary paper became one of the most successful periodicals in the English language; and it was evident that whatever his unfitness for mere political leader-writing, Mr. Dickens was abundantly competent to superintend a periodical with regularity and efficiency; to write, select, and edit with practical and workmanlike skill, and to select judiciously and conduct with kindness and decision the necessary staff of subordinates. In 1857, owing to a disagreement with Bradbury & Evans, "Household Words" was discontinued, and

Mr. Dickens at once established *All the Year Round* instead, the publishers being his own old publishers, Messrs. Chapman & Hall. Mr. W. H. Wills, who had been employed with Dickens on the *Daily News*, and who was one of the originators of the London *Punch*, was for a long time the chief assistant of Mr. Dickens in the periodical, having only been succeeded, a little before Mr. Dickens's death, by the eldest son of the latter. In *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, first appeared, as "serials," "Hard Times," "A Tale of Two Cities," and "Great Expectations," and likewise the "Child's History of England," and the collection of sketches of reminiscence, travel, and character, called "The Uncommercial Traveller." Besides these works, the Chief Editor bestowed an immense amount of time, thought, and labor on his periodical, for in whatever savored of detail or drudgery—in the mechanical part of what he was concerned with, Mr. Dickens was as laborious, thorough, workmanlike, and regular as though he had been nothing but a head book-keeper. The following particulars of his editorial habits are interesting. They are from a communication only a day or two after his death, in the *Daily News*, which he founded:

"Although his intimate friend and partner, Mr. W. H. Wills, filled the post of acting editor until twelve or eighteen months ago (when he resigned the position to Mr. Charles Dickens the younger), and saved Mr. Dickens much of the labor of selection, we believe we are correct in stating that every article in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*

so much of any of its author's great qualities, as the previous novels. Yet if any distinction can be drawn between the two series of works, it is probably only in the quantity of gayety and humor in them. Whatever the power of the serious characters of the later novels as compared with the earlier, the mirthful element is far less frequent in the later.

The "Christmas Stories," some of which have been almost as admired and as famous as the larger romances, were a series of five, published at Christmas of the years 1843–7. They need only be named, with their dates. They were, "The Christmas Carol," 1843; "The Chimes," 1844; "The Cricket on the Hearth," 1845; "The Battle of Life," 1846; and "The Haunted Man," 1847. Some critics have supposed that the last one or two of these series showed evidences of a fatigued mind. This may be true, in which case it was evidence of practical sense and self-knowledge to discontinue them.

A number of other short stories were written by Mr. Dickens, among which may be named "Mugby Junction"—a sarcastic account of the impertinences and impositions of the railway servants and eating-house and other accommodations at Rugby, which concentrated such a roar of public laughter on the abuses as actually to whip the corporation into a reform; "Dr. Marigold's Prescriptions," "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings," and "Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy."

This completes an approximate sketch of Mr. Dickens's literary labors, properly so called. Their intellectual total is not measurable; their mechanical total alone is a great one; for it would include the

editorial labor on the *Daily News*, that on *Bentley's Miscellany*, that on the forty large octavo volumes of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, and about sixty volumes of his own "Works," including the Novels, Tales, Sketches, Travels, Biography of Grimaldi, and History of England.

CHAPTER III.

Drama—Readings—Second Visit to America—Last Days.

Private friends of Mr. Dickens had long been familiar with his great fondness for acting, and his remarkable talent for it. It will be remembered that his first juvenile compositions were "certain tragedies." He used to extremely enjoy all manner of private theatricals, in which he was a most efficient helper in every department, from the carpenter's up to the hero's, and he has for a considerable time been reputed the best amateur actor in England. In the year 1846 he made a first public appearance as an actor in "The Elder Brother," which was performed for Miss Kelly's benefit, and nothing in his appearance or performance gave the least indication that he was not a regular professional dramatist. One of his biographers, in the *London News*, gives the following reminiscences of the same period, and of the eager ready zeal with which Mr. Dickens made himself a man-of-all-work in the cause:

"Twenty-five years ago 'Every Man in his Humor' was played at 'Miss Kelly's Theatre,' now the 'Royal Soho,' with Mr. Charles Dickens as *Captain Bobadil*, Mr. Mark Lemon as *Brainworm*, Mr. John Leech as *Master Matthew*, Mr. Frank Stone as *Jus-*

tice Clement, Mr. Gilbert a'Beckett as *William*, Mr. Douglas Jerrold as *Master Stephen*, Mr. Frederick Dickens as *Edward Knowell*, Mr. Alfred Dickens as *Thomas Cash*, and Mr. Dudley Costello as *Downright*. All dead. Mr. John Forster, Mr. Horace Mayhew, Mr. Blanchard Jerrold, and Mr. Evans are the sole survivors of the men of letters whose brilliant amateur performance was the town's talk then; and now that the life and soul of the enterprise—the man of business, the stage-manager, the ruling spirit—lies cold, men may well ask when we shall see such a conjunction of varied talent again. Charles Dickens was eminently dramatic in his genius and his tastes.

"Some of his dearest and closest friends were actors, and from the time of Mr. Macready to that of Mr. Fechter, his chosen intimates included many of the chief lights of the British stage. As an amateur actor he himself was unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Those who remember the performances on behalf of the Guild of Literature and Art; those given privately at Tavistock House about a dozen years ago; and those held on behalf of the Douglas Jerrold Memorial Fund, know that the dramatic readings which took the world by storm of late years were the ripened fruit of a long and intense admiration for and leaning to the stage. . . . .

"Some of the most competent judges have declared that the English stage lost an ornament, which would have revived its brightest days, by Charles Dickens succeeding as an author and making literature his profession. But Mr. Dickens's earnestness was such that he not only took upon his own

shoulders the most arduous tasks connected with the amateur performances for charitable objects with which he so often associated himself, but superintended the minutest detail, and often worked with his own hands to insure what he held to be the necessary effect.

"There are men living who remember his occupying himself for a whole day with hammer and nails on the stage of Miss Kelly's Theatre, while it was matter for playful jocularity among brave spirits who have gone before, that Dickens had converted himself into an amateur check-taker, and sat in the receipt of custom with Arthur Smith all day long at the Gallery of Illustration, when the Jerrold performances were about to be given. This is not the place to speak of the intense and laborious care he bestowed upon the performances given at his London house, or of the days he devoted to the superintendence of stage effects. The only place at which there was a chance of seeing Dickens at this time, said his intimates, was on his amateur stage, and there, absorbed in the subject of the hour, he would be found, resting one arm in the hand of the other, looking at the drops and cogitating upon their effect for the coming night, or working like any scene-shifter at the properties."

In 1855 was performed at Tavistock House, in London, where Mr. Dickens was then residing, a striking two-act play entitled "The Light-House," written by Mr. Wilkie Collins, Mr. Dickens himself taking the part of Aaron Gurnock, the head light-keeper. The play and the acting excited so much

curiosity in London society that after a good deal of urging it was repeated at a fashionable private residence, for the benefit of one of the organizations to aid the British soldiers in the Crimea. The audience was extremely brilliant; Mr. Collins, Mr. Mark Lemon, Mr. Dickens's sister-in-law Miss Hogarth, and his daughter Miss Dickens, the artist Mr. Egg, and others, were the actors; the scene was laid in the Eddystone Lighthouse, and the performance was such that it would have been highly successful as a professional one. Mr. Tom Taylor, the eminent critic, in an article in next morning's *Times*, remarked that—

"The acting of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Lemon was most admirable, not only worthy of professional actors, but of a kind not to be found save among the rarest talents. Aaron, a rough, rugged son of Cornwall, with the lines of misery deeply furrowed in his face, rendered more irritable than humble by remorse, and even inclined to bully his way through his own fears, is elaborated by Mr. Dickens with wonderful fulness of detail, so that there is not an accent, a growl, or a scowl without its distinctive significance. In a word, it was a great individual creation of a kind that has not been exhibited before."

One of Mr. Dickens's biographers makes the odd anachronism of attributing the characters of Fagin and Sikes to an imitation or development by Mr. Dickens of hints furnished by Mr. Collins in this play. The imitation must in that case have been executed some eighteen years before the original;

and when Mr. Collins, the author of the original, was not more than thirteen years old.

The Public Readings given by Mr. Dickens of late years, exhibited another phase of ability. Mr. Dickens's voice and other physical qualifications would probably not have given him much success if he had been a public reader and nothing else. But the immense familiarity of the public with his works, the singularly readable quality of these works, and the great dramatic ability of the author, rendered his appearance as a reader entirely satisfactory on the artistic side. Without one single artistic qualification, the public would have paid perhaps every cent that they did pay, to "see Dickens." For the very first condition of success as a lecturer or reader—except of course a reputation already gained specifically in those pursuits—is such a reputation gained in some other pursuit, that people will pay their admission fee *to see the speaker.*

The number of people who would pay to see Dickens during the last twenty years is perhaps almost as great as of those who would pay to see Shakspeare or Scott. And when, having seen him, the presence of the man was found so kindly and magnetic; when he read or recited, or rather re-improvised (the absolute life of his oral renderings of his own books justifies the term) matter so familiar that his hearers could follow him almost as easily as if he recited the Bible; when the pathetic and the ludicrous scenes sprang into such a vivid fulness of life the very voice, the very man, who first made them, it is no wonder that the success of Mr. Dick-

ens's public readings alone was equivalent to that of a whole successful life. His first appearance in this character was in London, April 13, 1861; and finding himself enthusiastically received, he read during the succeeding twelve months, in the principal cities of the United Kingdom. His second visit to America, during the winter of 1867–8, was in fact a tour for the purpose of giving a series of these readings in this country.

Just before leaving England, at a farewell dinner given to him in London, Mr. Dickens himself thus explained his proposed journey:

"Since I was there before, a vast and entirely new generation has arisen in the United States. Since I was there most of the best known of my books have been written and published. The new generation and the books have come together, and have kept together, until, at length, numbers of those who have so widely and constantly read me, naturally desiring a little variety in the relationship between us, have expressed a strong wish that I should read myself. This wish, at first conveyed to me through public channels, has gradually become enforcedly an immense accumulation of letters from individuals and associations of individuals, all expressing in the same hearty, homely, cordial, unaffected way, a kind of personal interest in me—I had almost said a kind of personal affection for me, which I am sure you would agree with me it would be dull insensibility on my part not to prize. Little by little this pressure has become so great that although, as Charles Lamb says, my household gods strike a

terribly deep root, I have torn them from their places, and this day week, at this hour, shall be upon the sea. You will readily conceive that I am inspired by a national desire to see for myself the astonishing change and progress of a quarter of a century over them, to grasp the hands of many faithful friends whom I left there, to see the faces of the multitude of new friends upon whom I have never looked, and last, not least, to use my best endeavor to lay down a third cable of intercommunication and alliance between the Old World and the New. Twelve years ago, when, Heaven knows, I little thought I should ever be bound on the voyage which now lays before me, I wrote in that form of my writings which obtains by far the most extensive circulation, these words of the American nation: 'I know full well, whatever little motes my beaming eyes may have descried in theirs, that they are a kind, large-hearted, generous, and great people.' In that faith I am going to see them again; in that faith I shall, please God, return from them in the Spring; in that same faith to live and to die."

The journey was made, and very few journeys have ever been made which gave so great a sum total of enjoyment. Mr. Dickens reached Boston November 19th, 1867; appeared for the first time before an American audience at the Tremont Temple, Boston, on the evening of December 2d; made a rapid circuit through a number of the principal cities of the Union, reading invariably to crowded and delighted audiences; appeared for the last time at Steinway Hall, in New York, April 20th, 1868;

and sailed for England on the 22d, carrying with him two hundred thousand dollars (gold), a sign which probably implied as much genuine enjoyment in the paying as any equal amount ever transferred. At the last reading in Steinway Hall, being recalled by the audience, he bade them farewell in the following few words, full of the feeling of personal friendliness so visible throughout his works:

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: The shadow of one word has impended over me all this evening, but the time has at length come when the shadow must fall. It is a short word, but its weight is not measured by its length. Last Thursday evening, while I read the story of 'David Copperfield,' I felt that there was another meaning than usual in the words of old Mr. Peggotty, 'My future life lies over the sea.' And when I read from this book to-night (referring to the 'Pickwick Papers'), I realized that I must shortly establish such an *alibi* as would satisfy even Mr. Weller senior. The relations set up in this place between us have been to me of the most satisfactory character. There has been on my part the most earnest attention to the work of preparation to entertain you, and on your part the kindest sympathy, which cannot be forgotten forever. I shall often recall you by the winter fire of my home, or in the pleasant summer of Old England—never as a public audience, but always as dear personal friends, and ever with the tenderest sympathy and affection. In bidding you a final farewell, I pray God bless us, every one, and God bless the land in which I leave you."

A number of the younger newspaper men of New York City organized a public dinner in honor of Mr. Dickens during this visit, which took place April 18th, and was an extremely pleasant occasion. Among the two hundred guests were some of the leading editors of the United States. Mr. Horace Greeley presided, and in the remarks with which he ushered in the speech-making, he began by acknowledging his obligations to the guest of the evening, whom he had, about thirty-four years before, appointed an unpaid contributor to the *New Yorker*, inserting, he said, in the very "first number" of it the sketch called "Passage in the Life of Mr. Watkins Tottle." The statement is not quite correct, by the by; for Mr. Greeley says the sketch was, as first published, called "Delicate Intentions," which is not the case, and instead of being in the first number it was in the twenty-third. Mr. Greeley might have made another point which would have amused Dickens,—but he did not. He might have explained that in a subsequent number of the *New Yorker*, on October 12th, 1839, he printed an indignant and very solemn article in favor of International Copyright, ending with the fervent wish "that our National Legislature will, ere long, take into consideration the legal and weighty claims which are presented by foreign authors for the security of their rights in this country; and that, actuated by those great principles of eternal justice which form the basis of International Right, our government will extend to them the protection to which they are justly entitled." And, he might have

continued, in illustration of this principle, a little afterward he inserted in the same *New Yorker*, "Master Humphrey's Clock," without paying for it.

Mr. Dickens's speech in reply to Mr. Greeley was a very good specimen of his abilities as an after-dinner speaker; and as it was in some sense a representative speech, showing his sentiments about his brethren of the newspaper press, his deliberate and mature opinions about this country, and his earnest love of peace and harmony among the nations, and as his speeches are less familiar than his other utterances, it is here inserted in full. Mr. Dickens said (after having had to wait some minutes for the cheering to subside):

"GENTLEMEN: I cannot do better than to take my cue from your distinguished President, and refer in my first remarks to *his* remarks in connection with the old, natural association between you and me. When I received an invitation from a private association of working members of the Press of New York to dine with them to-day, I accepted that compliment in grateful remembrance of a calling that was once my own, and in loyal sympathy toward a brotherhood which, in spirit, I have never quitted. To the wholesome training of severe newspaper work, when I was a very young man, I constantly refer my first successes; and my sons will hereafter testify of their father that he was always steadily proud of that ladder by which he rose. If it were otherwise, I should have but a very poor opinion of their father, which, perhaps, upon the whole, I have not. Hence, gentlemen, under any circumstances, this company

would have been exceptionally interesting and gratifying to me. But whereas I supposed that, like the fairies' pavilion in the 'Arabian Nights,' it would be but a mere handful, and I find it turn out, like the same elastic pavilion, capable of comprehending a multitude, so much the more proud am I of the honor of being your guest; for you will readily believe that the more widely representative of the Press in America my entertainers are, the more I must feel the good-will and the kindly sentiments toward me of that vast institution. Gentlemen, so much of my voice has lately been heard in the land, and I have, for upward of four hard winter months, so contended against what I have been sometimes quite admiringly assured was 'a true American catarrh'—a possession which I have throughout highly appreciated, though I might have preferred to be naturalized by any other outward and visible means: I say, gentlemen, so much of my voice has lately been heard, that I might have been contented with troubling you no further from my present standing-point, were it not a duty with which I henceforth charge myself, not only here but on every suitable occasion, whatsoever and wheresoever, to express my high and grateful sense of my second reception in America, and to bear my honest testimony to the national generosity and magnanimity. Also, to declare how astounded I have been by the amazing changes that I have seen around me on every side, changes moral, changes physical, changes in the amount of land subdued and cultivated, changes in the rise of vast new cities, changes in the growth of older cities

almost out of recognition, changes in the growth of the graces and amenities of life, changes in the Press, without whose advancement no advancement can take place anywhere. Nor am I, believe me, so arrogant as to suppose that in five and twenty years there have been no changes in me, and that I had nothing to learn and no extreme impressions to correct when I was here first. And, gentlemen, this brings me to a point on which I have, ever since I landed here last November, observed a strict silence, however tempted sometimes to break it, but in reference to which I will, with your good leave, take you into my confidence now. Even the Press, being human, may be sometimes mistaken or misinformed, and I rather think that I have in one or two rare instances known its information to be not perfectly accurate in reference to myself. Indeed, I have now and again been more surprised by printed news that I have read of myself, than by any other printed news that I have ever read in my present state of existence. Thus, the vigor and perseverance with which I have for some months past been collecting materials for, and hammering away at, a new book on America has much astonished me; seeing that all that time it has been perfectly well known to my publishers on both sides of the Atlantic that I positively declared that no consideration on earth should induce me to write one. But what I have intended, what I have resolved upon (and this is the confidence I seek to place in you), is, on my return to England, in my own English journal, manfully, promptly, plainly, in my own person, to bear,

for the behoof of my countrymen, such testimony to the gigantic changes in this country as I have hinted at to-night. Also, to record that wherever I have been, in the smallest places equally with the largest, I have been received with unsurpassable politeness, delicacy, sweet temper, hospitality, and consideration, and with unsurpassable respect for the privacy daily enforced upon me by the nature of my avocation here and the state of my health. This testimony, so long as I live and so long as my descendants have any legal right in my books, I shall cause to be republished, as an appendix to every copy of those two books of mine in which I have referred to America. And this I will do and cause to be done, not in mere love and thankfulness, but because I regard it as an act of plain justice and honor. Gentlemen, the transition from my own feelings toward and interest in America to those of the mass of my countrymen, seems to be a natural one; but whether or no, I make it with an express object. I was asked in this very city, about last Christmas time, whether an American was not at some disadvantage in England, as a foreigner! The notion of an American's being regarded in England as a foreigner at all, of his ever being thought of or spoken of in that character, was so uncommonly incongruous and absurd to me, that my gravity was for the moment quite overpowered. As soon as it was restored, I said that for years and years past I hoped I had had as many American friends, and had received as many American visitors as almost any Englishman living, and that my unvarying experience, for-

tified by theirs, was that it was enough in England to be an American to be received with the readiest respect and recognition anywhere. Thereupon, out of half-a-dozen people, suddenly spake out two, one an American gentleman with a cultivated taste for art, who, finding himself on a certain Sunday outside the walls of a certain historical English castle, famous for its pictures, was refused admission there, according to the strict rule of the establishment on that day, but who on merely representing that he was an American gentleman, on his travels, had not only the picture gallery, but the whole castle placed at his immediate disposal. The other was a lady, who, being in London, and having a great desire to see a particular museum, was assured by the English family with whom she stayed that it was impossible, because the place was closed for a week, and she had only three days there. Upon the lady's going to the museum, as she assured me, alone, self-introduced as an American lady, the gate flew open, as it were, magically. I am unwillingly bound to add that the lady certainly was young and extremely pretty. Still, the porter of that institution is of an obese habit, and, according to the best of my observation of him, not very impressible. Now, gentlemen, I refer to these trifles as a collateral assurance to you that the Englishman who shall humbly strive, as I hope to do, to be in England as faithful to America as to England herself, has no previous conceptions to contend against. Points of difference there have been, points of difference there are, points of difference there probably always will be between the

two great peoples. But broadcast in England is sown the sentiment that those two peoples are essentially one, and that it rests with them jointly to uphold the great Anglo-Saxon race, to which our President has referred, and all its great achievements before the world. If I know anything of my countrymen, and they give me credit for knowing something, if I know anything of my countrymen, gentlemen, the English heart is stirred by the fluttering of those Stars and Stripes, as it is stirred by no other flag that flies except its own. If I know my countrymen, in any and every relation toward America, they begin, not as Sir Anthony Absolute recommended lovers to begin, with a 'little aversion,' but with a great liking and a profound respect; and whatever the little sensitiveness of the moment, or the little official passion, or the litte official policy now, or then, or here, or there, may be, take my word for it, that the first, enduring, great popular consideration in England is a generous construction of justice. Finally, gentlemen, and I say this subject to your correction, I do believe that from the great majority of honest minds on both sides, there cannot be absent the conviction that it would be better for this globe to be riven by an earthquake, fired by a comet, overrun by an iceberg, and abandoned to the Arctic fox and bear, than that it should present the spectacle of these two great nations, each of whom has, in its own way and hour, striven so hard and so successfully for freedom, ever again being arrayed the one against the other. Gentlemen, I cannot thank your President enough, or you enough, for your kind reception of my health and of my poor

remarks; but believe me, I do thank you with the utmost fervor of which my soul is capable."

The declarations in this sprightly and friendly little address which relate to the United States, were advertised in some quarters as a "recantation" of his previous opinions or assertions. If the passage be carefully read it will be seen that there would be more reason in calling it a re-assertion of them. It is precisely this: a statement that since his first visit there have been great improvements and advances of all kinds, together with the admission that the speaker was liable to error as other men are. This was certainly enough, for it was the truth. But it was very far indeed from an admission that his previous views were wrong; this would have been an untruth. They were right, and Mr. Dickens thought so; and he was the last man in the world to retract his beliefs or contradict his own deliberate recorded statements.

There was a good deal of other good speaking at this dinner, notably by Hon. Henry J. Raymond—whose death a few months before that of Mr. Dickens was attended with closely similar symptoms—and by Mr. G. W. Curtis, the one a most competent sponsor to reply to the reporter and editor, and the other to the author.

Having thus, as it were, effected a satisfactory balance of accounts with America, the country being reckoned satisfied with seeing and hearing the great master whose books had been the delight of its households for a third of a century, and in particular with his New York declaration; and testifying

to that satisfaction through the money payment already mentioned; and the master himself being satisfied with both cash and kindness, he took his leave, being attended to the steamer by a number of personal friends, among them Mr. Fields, of the firm of Fields, Osgood & Co., Mr. Dickens's own authorized publishers in the United States. Mr. Fields' own social accomplishments, and agreeable manners, and friendly disposition, are in so many points like Mr. Dickens's own, that it is no wonder they were particularly fond of each other, and that their farewell was affectionate enough to seem a little too much so to some of the more "apathetic" of the Americans. The consequence was the following little squib in one of the New York dailies, which it will do no harm to reprint, as a smartish specimen of its kind:

"'KISS ME QUICK AND GO.'

"BY 'ELDER.'

"'The leave-taking was very affecting. On parting from Mr. Dickens, Mr. Fields, his Boston publisher, took him by the hand, and bending toward him, kissed Mr. Dickens affectionately on the cheek.'—*Evening paper.*

"The sun is sinking fast, Charles,
And day will soon be o'er,
When Sandy Hook is past, Charles,
You'll see us 'nary more;'
One kiss before we part, Charles,
While love my bosom tears,
Perhaps it don't look smart, Charles,
But who the *Dickens* cares?

Then 'kiss me quick and go,' Charles,
Then 'kiss me quick and go;'

Oh, place your ruby lips to mine,
Then 'kiss me quick and go.'

"May winds blow gently 'round, Charles,
And waves in frolic play;
No thunder's awful sound, Charles,
Molest your happy way.
We pray you not to grieve, Charles,
And greet you with a cheer,
While by your gracious leave, Charles,
We launch a private tear.
Then 'kiss me quick and go,' Charles, &c.

"A thousand friendly throats, Charles,
Bid you good-speed to-day,
But don't write any 'Notes,' Charles,
And say 'twas 't'other way.'
You once invoked your spleen, Charles,
And struck us hard and sore;
But now you're not so green, Charles,
About our Yankee shore.
Then 'kiss me quick and go,' Charles, &c.

"Now, place your hand in mine, Charles,
And look me in the eye,
With that sweet glance divine, Charles—
Oh why that pensive sigh?
They'll soon the anchor weigh, Charles
The wheels begin to turn;
I dare not longer stay, Charles,
So home I go to mourn!
So, 'kiss me quick and go,' Charles,
So, 'kiss me quick and go;'
Send all your books to Boston, Charles,
Now, 'kiss me quick and go.'"

The last line but one, it will be noticed, insinuates that Mr. Fields' kiss was dictated by financial considerations. This is really a wholly unnecessary in-

nendo, as any personal friend of Mr. Fields knows very well. Besides, even if the ceremony in question had been for such a purpose, is there a publisher in New York who would not have kissed Mr. Dickens's cheek to secure the privilege of publishing his books with his personal authority?

Mr. Dickens's last work, "The Mystery of Edwin Drood," began to appear in April, 1870. Up to that time, his literary work after his return from America had consisted of little more than editorial labor on *All the Year Round*, and his last composition before "Edwin Drood" was a sketch of his old friend and zealous admirer, Walter Savage Landor, for that periodical.

His wonderful physical frame, dense, wiry, and enduring as its texture was, had, however, by this time begun to show signs of failing. While at Preston, in Lancashire, during a tour of readings in the previous year, he had been so suddenly and immediately threatened with an apoplectic stroke, that his physician peremptorily ordered him to give up the attempt. It was a question of minutes; for the decision was made after the evening's audience had begun to assemble. He had either to stop or die. If, having stopped, he could have kept himself, so to speak, inert and empty-minded for a time, there is no reason, apparently, why he should not have survived for twenty years longer the constitutional crisis which was upon him; for it was probably the physiological experience which occurs so frequently near his time of life as to have given occasion for the tradition of a "grand climac-

teric" at the age of sixty-three, and which may have been in his case brought on a few years before its time by his incessant and immense drafts upon his vital capital. It seems to have been impossible for him to be idle; and although he had for some time been receiving further hints of what he was about, in the form of occasional attacks of neuralgia, sometimes very violent and painful, he worked away as resolutely as ever. Beginning his last novel, after five or six years' intermission since "Our Mutual Friend," he found that his chariot wheels drove heavily. His thoughts did not come so spontaneously nor so plenteously as usual. He was not so fully the master of his subject; and already he had been a little vexing himself for having, as he supposed, told too much of the story within the first few numbers. He went steadily on with it, nevertheless; and as far as he went, the whole of his old power was there except the fun. The feeling of "Edwin Drood" is grave throughout, its predominant tone being scarcely relieved by the satirical portions. There is not a hearty laugh in it, nothing gayer than a quiet smile.

On Wednesday, June 8th, 1870, he wrote a few pages of the novel—the last. They completed about one-half of the book. On the same day he wrote a letter, which was perhaps his last. It was in reply to a gentleman who had written to him about the following words in the tenth chapter of "Edwin Drood:"

"—— would the Reverend Septimus submissively be led, like the highly popular lamb who has so long

and unresistingly been led to the slaughter, and there would he, unlike that lamb, bore nobody but himself."

This passage had given offence to certain persons, who considered it an irreverent allusion. Mr. Dickens wrote in reply, as follows:

"GAD'S HILL PLACE, HIGHAM BY ROCHESTER, KENT,
"WEDNESDAY, the 8th June, 1870.

"DEAR SIR:—It would be quite inconceivable to me—but for your letter—that any reasonable reader could possibly attach a scriptural reference to a passage in a book of mine, reproducing a much-abused social figure of speech, impressed into all sorts of service, on all sorts of inappropriate occasions, without the faintest connection of it with its original source. I am truly shocked to find that any reader can make the mistake. I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of our Saviour; because I feel it; and because I re-wrote that history for my children—every one of whom knew it from having it repeated to them, long before they could read, and almost as soon as they could speak. But I have never made proclamation of this from the house-tops. Faithfully yours,

"CHARLES DICKENS."

On that same day at dinner, which was at his usual hour, six o'clock, his sister-in-law, Miss Georgine Hogarth, observing signs of distress in his face, remarked that he must be ill. He replied, "Oh no; I have only got a headache. I shall be

better presently." He now asked to have the window shut; and almost immediately fell back in his chair and became insensible. He never recovered consciousness; but after remaining for twenty-four hours in the same condition, which the physicians who were promptly called in at once pronounced hopeless, he died, at a quarter past six on the evening of the next day, Thursday, June 9th, 1870.

There is here a coincidence of date with a railroad accident in which he had a narrow escape five years before, and which took place June 9th, 1865. In a postscript to "Our Mutual Friend," the great novelist, closing his observations with a short reference to this escape, marked with appropriate words, though without meaning to do so, the close of his series of completed romances. The last sentence of that postscript was:

"I remember with devout thankfulness that I can never be much nearer parting company with my readers forever, than I was then, until there shall be written against my life the two words with which I have this day closed this book:—THE END."

He was buried on the 14th, in Westminster Abbey, not at his own request, but upon the suggestion of the authorities who control that famous sepulchre of famous men. It was found that this could be done without violating the injunctions in his will, that his funeral should be a private and quiet one. A special train carried the coffin and the small train of mourners to London. A hearse and three mourning coaches were all the procession to the Abbey. There was nothing whatever of the usual senseless under-

taker's finery. Dean Stanley read the burial-service. The coffin was an oak coffin, with a brass plate, having upon it the inscription:

CHARLES DICKENS,
BORN FEBRUARY 7th, 1812,
DIED JUNE 9th, 1870.

The few mourners threw flowers upon the coffin, and then departed, and the simple and quiet funeral was over. To comply with a general desire, the grave was allowed to remain open for a time, and the coffin was soon completely covered with flowers thrown upon it by those who came to visit it.

That the extreme simplicity and privacy of these funeral ceremonies were felt to be the merest compliance with the wishes of the dead, appears plainly enough, not merely as having been requested in the will, but from his own practice. Having been on one occasion asked to help inaugurate a monument in Kensal Green Cemetery, he declined in the following courteous but very positive words, which will be strongly sympathized with by persons of delicacy:

"MY DEAR MR. OLLIER: I am very sensible of the feeling of the committee toward me, and I receive their invitation (conveyed through you) as a most acceptable mark of their consideration. But I have a very strong objection to speech-making beside graves. I do not expect or wish my feeling in this wise to guide other men; still, it is so serious with me, and the idea of ever being the subject of such a ceremony myself is so repugnant to my soul, that I must decline to officiate.

"Faithfully, yours always, CHARLES DICKENS.
"*Edmund Ollier, Esq.*"

CHAPTER IV.

Private Life—Traits and Anecdotes.

Mr. Dickens's marriage, at the age of twenty-five, to Miss Hogarth, has been mentioned. Mr. and Mrs. Dickens have buried several children. Of six who survive him, one daughter is married to Mr. Charles A. Collins, a brother of Wilkie Collins the novelist; another daughter is unmarried; the eldest son, Charles Dickens, junior, according to his father's wish, succeeds him in the editorship of *All the Year Round;* a second is living in Australia, a third is in the English navy, and a fourth is at the University, where he is succeeding extremely well.

It is supposed by some that the appearance of Mrs. Dickens's sister, Miss Hogarth, as one of the actors in Mr. Collins' play of "The Light-House," in 1855, was in some way the cause of vexation to Mrs. Dickens, and thus the reason of the open quarrel which resulted in the separation of 1856. Others suppose this appearance to have been only the occasion of the disagreement in question. There are other scandals about the same cause, which it is unnecessary to examine. A flock of scandals always gathers around any such domestic misfortune, if the parties are widely known. There is reason to suppose, aside from the weight of Mr. Dickens's own

solemn assertions, that he and his wife were extremely ill suited to each other. At any rate, after living together for more than twenty years, a separation was agreed upon, of which Mr. Dickens himself gives the following account. It was written for the express purpose of publication, and of thus quieting the dust-cloud of gossip that was flying about:

"TAVISTOCK HOUSE, Tavistock Square,
"London, W. C., Tuesday, May 28, 1858.

"MY DEAR ARTHUR:

"You have not only my full permission to show this, but I beg you to show it to any one who wishes to do me right, or to any one who may have been misled into doing me wrong.

"Respectfully yours, C. D."

"TAVISTOCK HOUSE, Tavistock Square,
"London, W. C., Tuesday, May 28, 1858.

"TO ARTHUR SMITH, ESQ.:

"Mrs. Dickens and I have lived unhappily together for many years. Hardly any one who has known us intimately can fail to have known that we are in all respects of character and temperament wonderfully unsuited to each other. I suppose that no two people not vicious in themselves, ever were joined together who had a greater difficulty in understanding one another, or who had less in common. An attached woman servant, more friend to both of us than a servant, who lived with us sixteen years, and is now married, and who was and still is in Mrs. Dickens's confidence and mine, and who had the closest familiar experience of this unhappiness in

London, in the country, in France, in Italy, wherever we have been, year after year, month after month, week after week, day after day, will bear testimony to this.

"Nothing has, on many occasions, stood between us and a separation but Mrs. Dickens's sister, Georgine Hogarth. From the age of fifteen she has devoted herself to our house and our children. She has been their playmate, nurse, instructress, friend, protectress, adviser, and companion. In the manly consideration toward Mrs. Dickens which I owe to my wife, I will only remark of her that the peculiarity of her character has thrown all the children on some one else. I do not know—I cannot by any stretch of fancy imagine what would have become of them but for this aunt, who has grown up with them, to whom they are devoted, and who has sacrificed the best part of her youth and life to them.

"She has remonstrated, reasoned, suffered, and toiled, time and time again, to prevent separation between Mrs. Dickens and me. Mrs. Dickens has often expressed to her her sense of her affectionate care and devotion in the house—never more strongly than within the last twelve months.

"For some years past Mrs. Dickens has been in the habit of representing to me that it would be better for her to go away and live apart; that her always increasing estrangement made a mental disorder, under which she sometimes labors, worse; that she felt herself unfit for the life she had to lead as my wife, and that she would be far better away. I have uniformly replied that we must bear our mis-

fortune, and fight the fight out to the end; that the children were the first consideration, and that I feared they must bind us together 'in appearance.'

"At length, within these three weeks, it was suggested to me by Forster that even for their sakes it would be better to reconstruct and rearrange their unhappy home. I empowered him to treat with Mrs. Dickens, as the friend of both of us for one and twenty years. Mrs. Dickens wished to add, on her part, Mark Lemon, and did so. On Saturday last Lemon wrote to Forster that Mrs. Dickens 'gratefully and thankfully accepted' the terms I proposed to her. Of the pecuniary part of them I will only say that I believe that they are as generous as if Mrs. Dickens were a lady of distinction and I a man of fortune. The remaining parts of them are easily described—my eldest boy to live with Mrs. Dickens and take care of her; my eldest girl to keep my house; both my girls and all my children, but the eldest son, to live with me in the continued companionship of their Aunt Georgine, for whom they have all the tenderest affections that I have ever seen among young people, and who has a higher claim (as I have often declared, for many years) upon my affection, respect, and gratitude than any one in this world.

"I hope that no one who may become acquainted with what I write here can possibly be so cruel and unjust as to put any misconstruction on our separation, so far. My elder children all understand it perfectly, and all accept it as inevitable.

"There is not a shadow of doubt or concealment

among us. My eldest son and I are one as to it all.

"Two wicked persons, who should have spoken very differently of me, in consideration of earnest respect and gratitude, have (as I am told, and, indeed to my personal knowledge) coupled with this separation the name of a young lady for whom I have a great attachment and regard. I will not repeat her name—I honor it too much. Upon my soul and honor, there is not on this earth a more virtuous and spotless creature than that young lady. I know her to be innocent and pure, and as good as my own dear daughters.

"Further, I am quite sure that Mrs. Dickens, having received this assurance from me, must now believe it in the respect I know her to have for me, and in the perfect confidence I know her in her better moments to repose in my truthfulness.

"On this head, again, there is not a shadow of doubt or concealment between my children and me. All is open and plain among us, as though we were brothers and sisters. They are perfectly certain that I would not deceive them, and the confidence among us is without a fear."

Notwithstanding this family unhappiness, Mr. Dickens was kind and affectionate in all the domestic and social relations. His acquisition and occupancy of his recent residence at Gad's Hill constitute to a pleasant story of youthful aspiration gratified. An English biographer of Dickens thus tells the story:

"Though not born at Rochester, Mr. Dickens spent some portion of his boyhood there, and was wont to tell how his father, the late Mr. John Dickens, in the course of a country ramble, pointed out to him as a child the house at Gadshill-place, saying: 'There, my boy, if you work and mind your book, you will perhaps one day live in a house like that.' This speech sunk deep, and in after years, and in the course of his many long pedestrian rambles through the lanes and roads of the pleasant Kentish country, Mr. Dickens came to regard this Gadshill house lovingly, and to wish himself its possessor. This seemed an impossibility. The property was so held that there was no likelihood of its ever coming into market, and so Gadshill came to be alluded to jocularly as representing a fancy which was pleasant enough in dreamland, but would be never realized. Meanwhile the years rolled on, and Gadshill became almost forgotten. Then, a further lapse of time, and Mr. Dickens felt a strong wish to settle in the country, and determined to let Tavistock House. About this time, and by the strangest coincidences, his intimate friend and close ally, Mr. W. H. Wills, chanced to sit next to a lady at a London dinner party, who remarked in the course of conversation that a house and grounds had come into her possession of which she wanted to dispose. The reader will guess the rest. The house was in Kent, was not far from Rochester, had this and that distinguishing feature which made it like Gadshill and like no other place, and the upshot of Mr. Wills's dinner table chit-chat with a lady whom he had never

met before was, that Charles Dickens realized the dream of his youth, and became the possessor of Gadshill. It will now be sold, as well as the valuable collection of original pictures which Mr. Dickens gathered together during his life, and many of which are illustrative of his works."

The house at Gad's Hill is an old-fashioned one, plain and respectable and comfortable in appearance, a good deal like the roomy two-story brick house in a New England country town, of a well-to-do lawyer with a good taste for building and shrubbery. It is two stories high, with dormer windows lighting a third tier of rooms in the attic. There is an observatory on the roof, and over the front door a well-proportioned porch with pillars, where Mr. Dickens used often to stand in the intervals of his work, resting himself with a quiet look along the road and the fields before him. A plain iron railing shuts the house off from the road. It is handsomely and comfortably furnished; and the dining-room in particular was pleasantly set off with pictures and drawings, many of them gifts from his friends the artists, and illustrating scenes from his own writings. Among these was a portrait of Mr. Dickens himself, by his friend Maclise.

Gad's Hill is near Rochester, on the London side, and about twenty-five miles, or an hour's ride by rail, from London. At this, his favorite home, the successful author dispensed a wide, enjoying, and enjoyable hospitality. Mr. Donald G. Mitchell, in *Hearth and Home*, has given a very pleasant picture of Mr. Dickens in his own home, from which

the following passages are quoted. They paint him as a delightful companion and entertainer, as well as a kind friend and good neighbor, carrying with him a personal atmosphere of kind and humorous happiness, exactly such as might have been imagined from the most enjoyable of his novels:

"Dinner was a gala-time with him; but unceremonious and careless of dress as he might be in the earlier hours of the day, he, in his latter years at least, kept by the old English ceremonial dress for dinner. His butler and servant were also habited conventionally; and the same notion of conventional requirement, it will be remembered, he observed always in his readings and appearance on public occasions.

"But the laws of etiquette, however faithfully and constantly followed, did not sit easily on him; and there is no portrait of him which to our mind is so agreeable as that which represents him in an old, loose, morning jacket, leaning against a column of his porch upon Gad's Hill, with his family grouped around him.

"As dinner came to its close, the little grand-children tottled in—his 'venerable' friends, as he delighted to call them—and with their advent came always a rollicking time of cheer.

"After this, there may have been a lounge into the billiard-room, the master of the house passing his arm affectionately around a daughter, and inviting her to a sight of a game between a Yankee and John Bull.

"'Three-pence on the Yankee,' says Dickens. 'Now then, Harry (to his son), do your best.'

"'Hurra for England!' he says at a good strike.

"'Now then for the Yankee; and, remember—I've money up.'

"And so he keeps a reigning joy about him—with those eyebrows of his arching comically at every mirthful sally.

"Or, perhaps, it is not the billiard-room, but the velvety lawn, with its tufts of holly and Portugal laurel, to which he draws away his guests—in either case, intent most upon kindling smiles and wakening content."

"One day, a visitor had sat up with him till the 'wee small hours' of morning—an unusual circumstance, for which Mr. Dickens proposed to compensate by a long sleep. But when the doctor rose and looked out upon the lawn, there was his host, engaged in directing the workmen who were rolling and adjusting the cricket-ground.

"He had forgotten, he said, that his gardener, with the gardener of the rector, had the promise of the ground for a game with some of their companions. It was not in good order, and he had risen betimes to put everything in trim for his friends of the cricket-match.

"With this neighbor rector, by the by, he was on the best of terms; and, notwithstanding his democratic tendencies, had a strong yearning for the Established Church of England—not so much from love of its formalities, as from a kindly recognition of its ever-open doors to the feet of all the poor.

"The charity and kindliness that shone in his books belonged also to his life and every-day talk.

There was also a charming thoughfulness of others and self-abnegation in his familiar social intercourse. Upon the day preceding his final reading in New York, we had the pleasure of taking a twenty-mile drive in his company. We sat opposite to him in the carriage, and though twings of pain chased each other over his face, it was only by the greatest persuasion that we could induce him to rest his bandaged and suffering foot upon the seat beside us. We need hardly say to those who listened to his readings, with what zest and charm he told a story—how he made the characters of it come before you—how he summoned them all into presence, and made you a wondering partner in new and strange scenes. As a listener too, he was of the kindliest and most sympathetic; listening with lip and eye and arched eyebrow—smacking the least touch of humor—going before your meaning and interpreting by swift expression of feature what your words were too slow to reveal.

"Personally, we are most glad to have recollection of him as a most genial and kindly man, with not the remotest show of self-consequence—with no sparkle of conceit—with no irritating condescension, but, throughout and in all, frank, warm, hearty, cheery, and companionable."

Mr. Hawthorne, in his "English Note Book," records various reports about Dickens, whom he seems not to have met personally. It is a pity; the observations of so penetrating and intuitive a practical psychologist as the great American, upon so interesting a character as the great Englishman,

would have been extremely valuable and interesting. Some one, in Hawthorne's presence, he says, "mentioned his domestic tastes,—how he preferred home enjoyments to all others, and did not willingly go much into society. Mrs. ——, too, the other day told us of his taking on himself all possible trouble as regards his domestic affairs."

Mr. Philp, of Washington, has recorded the following very similar portraiture of Mr. Dickens's home and home life:

"On arrival (half-past twelve), commenced with 'cider cup,' which had previously been ordered to be ready for us—delicious cooling drink—cider, soda-water, sherry, brandy, lemon-peel, sugar, and ice, flavored with an herb called burrage, all judiciously mixed. Lunch at one o'clock, completed by a liquor which Dickens said was 'peculiar to the house.' From two to half-past five we were engaged in a large open meadow at the back of the house, in the healthful and *intellectual* employment of playing 'Aunt Sally' and rolling balls on the grass; at half-past three, interval for 'cool brandy and water;' at half-past six o'clock we dined—young Charles Dickens, and a still younger Charles Dickens (making three generations), having arrived in the mean time—dinner faultless, wines irreproachable; nine to ten, billiards, ten to eleven music in the drawing-room; eleven, 'hot and rebellious liquors,' delightfully compounded into punches; twelve, to bed.

"The house is a charming old mansion, a little modernized; the lawn exquisitely beautiful, and

illuminated by thousands of scarlet geraniums; the estate is covered with magnificent old trees, and several Cedars of Lebanon I have never seen equalled. In the midst of a small plantation, across the road opposite the house, approached by a tunnel from the lawn under the turnpike road, is a French châlet, sent to Dickens as a present in ninety-eight packing-cases! Here Mr. Dickens does most of his writing, where he can be perfectly quiet and not disturbed by anybody. I need scarcely say that the house is crowded with fine pictures, original sketches for his books, choice engravings, etc.; in fact, one might be amused for a month in looking over the objects of interest, which are numerous and beautiful.

"Inside the hall are portions of the scenery, painted by Stanfield for the 'Frozen Deep,' the play in which Dickens and others performed for the benefit of Douglas Jerrold's family, written by Wilkie Collins. Just as you enter, in a neat frame, written and illuminated by Owen Jones, is the following:

"This House,
"Gad's Hill Place,

stands on the summit of Shakspeare's Gad's Hill, ever memorable for its association, in his noble fancy, with Sir John Falstaff.

"'But, my lads, my lads, to-morrow morning by four o'clock, early at Gad's Hill. There are pilgrims going to Canterbury with rich offerings, and traders riding to London with fat purses. I have visors for all; you have horses for yourselves.'

"In the dining-room hangs Frith's original picture of Dolly Varden, and Maclise's portrait of Dickens

when a young man; also Cattermole's wonderful drawings, illustrating some of Dickens's most touching scenes; besides several exquisite works by Marcus Stone (who illustrated 'Our Mutual Friend'), David Roberts, Callow, Stanfield, and others. My bedroom was the perfection of a sleeping apartment—the view across the Kentish hills, with a distant peep at the Thames, charming; the screen shutting off the dressing-room from the bedroom is covered with proof impressions, neatly framed, of the illustrations to 'Our Mutual Friend,' and other works. In every room I found a table covered with writing materials, headed note paper and envelopes, cut quill pens, wax-matches, sealing-wax, and all scrupulously neat and orderly. There are magnificent specimens of Newfoundland dogs on the grounds, such animals as Landseer would love to paint. One of them, Bumble, seems to be the favorite with Dickens. They are all named after characters in Dickens's works. Dickens at home seems to be perpetually jolly, and enters into the interests of games with all the ardor of a boy. Physically (as well as mentally) he is immensely strong, having quite regained his wonted health and strength. He is an immense walker, and never seems to be fatigued. He breakfasts at eight o'clock; immediately after answers all the letters received that morning, writes until one o'clock, lunches, walks twelve miles (every day), dines at six, and passes the evening entertaining his numerous friends."

The wonderful physical strength and endurance which Mr. Dickens possessed was undoubtedly an

indispensable condition of his great mental productiveness. His habitual performances and extraordinary speed and endurance as a pedestrian showed almost the abilities of a professional athlete. Mr. Hawthorne thus records a specimen of his enduring vitality, that reminds us of some of the stories about Seargeant S. Prentiss of Mississippi:

"A gentleman, in instance of Mr. Dickens's unweariability, said that during some theatrical performances in Liverpool he acted in play and farce, spent the rest of the night making speeches, feasting and drinking at table, and ended at seven o'clock in the morning by jumping leap-frog over the backs of the whole company."

A writer in a London paper has drawn the following picturesque contrast between the personal appearance and locomotive habits of Thackeray and Dickens:

"The towering stature, the snowy locks, the glistening spectacles, the listless, slouching port, as that of a tired giant, of William Makepeace Thackeray, were familiar enough likewise in London a few years since, but, comparatively speaking, only to a select few. He belonged to Club-land, and was only to be seen sauntering there or in West End squares, or on his road to his beloved Kensington, or in the antique hall at Charterhouse on Founders' day, or on Eton bridge on the 4th of June, or sometimes, haply, on the top of a Richmond omnibus journeying to a brief furlough at Rose Cottage. Thackeray in Houndsditch, Thackeray in Bethnal Green or at Camden Town, would have appeared anomalous; as well

could we picture Carlyle at Cremorne, or Tennyson at Garraway's; but Charles Dickens, when in town, was ubiquitous.

"He was to be met, by those who knew him, everywhere—and who did not know him? Who had not heard him, and who had not seen his photograph in the shop windows? The omnibus conductors knew him, the street boys knew him; and perhaps the locality where his recognition would have been least frequent—for all that he was a member of the Athenæum Club—was Pall Mall. Elsewhere he would turn up in the oddest places, and in the most inclement of weather; in Ratcliff Highway, on Haverstock-hill, on Camberwell-green, in Gray's Inn-lane, in the Wandsworth road, at Hammersmith Broadway, in Norton Folgate, and at Kensal New Town. A hansom whirled you by the Bell and Horns at Brompton, and there was Charles Dickens striding, as with seven-league boots, seemingly in the direction of North End, Fulham. The Metropolitan Railway sent you forth at Lisson Grove, and you met Charles Dickens plodding speedily toward the Yorkshire Stingo. He was to be met rapidly skirting the grim brick wall of the prison in Coldbath Fields, or trudging along the Seven Sisters road at Holloway, or bearing, under a steady press of sail, underneath Highgate Archway, or pursuing the even tenor of his way up the Vauxhall Bridge road. He seemed to prefer the lengthy thoroughfares of our exterior boulevards to narrow and intricate streets. They offered, perhaps, a better opportunity for fair and honest walking, and for the per-

formance of that self-appointed task of pedestrianism which for so many years he had undertaken, and which well-nigh undeviatingly, and wherever he was—in London, at home at Gad's Hill, in France, in Italy, or in America—he performed to its last rood and furlong."

Mr. Dickens's face is now almost as familiar as George Washington's. What was perhaps his most striking feature, however, is one that a picture is least capable of representing—that which most of all expresses the character and life of the man—the vivid, penetrating brightness of his eyes. A contemporary editor, in recording his impression of him, says that, when he first saw him, he was "a handsome young man, with piercing bright eyes and carefully-arranged hair." And again: "The last time I saw him was a few weeks since, when I had the pleasure of meeting him at dinner. To all outward appearance he then looked like a man who would live and work until he was fourscore. I was especially struck by the brilliancy and vivacity of his eyes. There seemed as much life and animation in them as in twenty ordinary pairs of eyes."

This writer also refers to Mr. Dickens being often thought to have a "sailor-like" look. The same peculiarity is referred to by another writer, who also speaks of his harmless fancy for striking colors and decorative effect generally, in the matter of costume:

"His appearance in walking-dress in the street during his later years was decidedly 'odd,' and almost eccentric, being marked by strongly pro-

nounced colors, and a cut of the garments which had somewhat of a sporting and somewhat of a theatrical guise. To those who did not know that he was Charles Dickens, he might have been some prosperous sea-captain home from a long voyage, some western senator on a tour in Europe, some country gentleman of Devon or of Yorkshire who now and then bred a colt or two, and won a cup, but never betted."

The single flower or little bouquet at his button-hole was worn after a very general English habit; but it attracted some attention in his public appearances in America, as did his watch-chains and so forth, and the generally "accented" style of his costume.

His keen enjoyment of the society of friends was carried to an extent, in respect of convivial indulgence, which has left upon his printed works the only feature that is really open to animadversion. The alcoholic coloring of "Pickwick" has already been mentioned. There is less of it in his other novels, and less and less as the series goes on; but on the whole, and for the United States, it cannot be said that his works can be safely received as a guide in the matter of using alcoholic beverages. At the same time, in forming a judgment upon him in this respect, it must always be remembered that the general sentiment among the English is by no means as distinctly opposed to the use of spirituous drinks as among ourselves, and that the climatic conditions of England and the United States differ so much that it is matter of physiological experience that about twice as much liquor of any kind can be

taken in England as in this country, for the same effect. This is not said, of course, as an argument either for or against total abstinence, but merely to give the elements of a fair verdict upon the novelist.

The one or two specimens that have been given of Mr. Dickens's addresses are full of this genial, hearty, happy, kind feeling that Mr. Mitchell describes so well, and it appears as plainly in his correspondence. But it was so largely interfused throughout the whole nature of the man, that it could not but color all his deeds and words. With whomsoever he dealt in any way, he preferred to give enjoyment. This quality is very visible in the hearty letters of friendship, thanks, or praise which he was wont to send to his brother authors on occasion. When Mr. Blanchard had praised the "Christmas Carol," Mr. Dickens replied, with a delightful and unconcealed pleasure:

"But I must thank you, because you have filled my heart up to the brim, and it is running over. You meant to give me great pleasure, my dear fellow, and you have done it. The tone of your elegant and fervent praise has touched me in the tenderest place. I cannot write about it; and as to talking of it, I could no more do that than a dumb man. I have derived inexpressible gratification from what I know and feel was a labor of love on your part, and I can never forget it. When I think it likely that I may meet you . . . I shall slip a Carol into my pocket, and ask you to put it among your books for my sake. You will never like it the less for having made it the means of so much happiness to me."

To Douglas Jerrold he wrote, speaking of Jerrold's successful play, "Time Works Wonders," in a tone of thorough commendation that must have been welcome:

"I am greatly struck by the whole idea of the piece. The eloquence in the beginning, and the consequences that flow from it, and their delicate and masterly exposition, are of the freshest, truest, and most vigorous kind; the characters, especially the governess, among the best I know; and the wit and the wisdom of it are never asunder. I could almost find it in my heart to sit down and write you a long letter on the subject of this play; but I won't. I will only thank you for it heartily, and add that I agree with you in thinking it incomparably the best of your dramatic writings."

At subsequent times he wrote to the same laborious writer, whose circumstances and temperament made the doing so both a compliment and a kindness, on different occasions as follows.

On receiving Jerrold's "Story of a Feather:"

"I am truly proud of your remembrance, and have put the 'Story of a Feather' on a shelf (not an obscure one) where some other feathers are, which it shall help to show mankind which way the wind blows, long after we know where the wind comes from. I am quite delighted to find that you have touched the latter part again, and touched it with such a delicate and tender hand. It is a wise and beautiful book. I am sure I may venture to say so to you, for nobody consulted it more [illegible] earnestly than I did as it came out

in acknowledgment of a reference to the "Christmas Carol":

"It was very hearty and good of you, Jerrold, to make that affectionate mention of the 'Carol' in [illegible], and I assure you it was not lost upon the distant object of your manly regard, but touched him as you wished and meant it should. I wish we had not lost so much time" [meaning, of course, "had employed more time" in improving our personal knowledge of each other. But I have so steadily read you, and so selfishly gratified myself in always expressing the admiration with which your gallant truths inspired me, that I must not call it lost time either."

Of two passages in a letter to Jerrold in the year 1846, the first is interesting for its views of "literary friendship," the last as revealing a curious personal endowment of the writer:

"My dear Jerrold: This day week I finished my little Christmas book (writing toward the close the exact words of a passage in your affectionate letter received this morning: to wit, 'After all, life has something serious in it'), and ran over here" [he was at Geneva] "for a week's rest. I cannot tell you how much true gratification I have had in your most hearty letter. F. told me that the same spirit breathed through a notice of 'Dombey' in your paper, and I have been saying since to K. and G. that there is no such good way of testing the worth of a literary friendship, as by comparing its influence on one's mind with any that literary ani-

mosity can produce. Mr. W. will throw me into a violent fit of anger for the moment, it is true; but his acts and deeds pass into the death of all bad things next day, and rot out of my memory; whereas a generous sympathy, like yours, is ever present to me, ever fresh and new to me—always stimulating, cheerful, and delightful. The pain of unjust malice is lost in an hour. The pleasure of a generous friendship is the steadiest joy in the world. What a glorious and comfortable thing that is to think of!

. . . "I have had great success again in magnetism. E., who has been with us for a week or so, holds my magnetic powers in great veneration, and I really think they are, by some conjunction of chances, strong.

"Let them, or something else, hold you to me by the heart. Ever, my dear Jerrold,

"Affectionately your friend."

In one of his letters to Jerrold, Mr. Dickens told a funny story which is worth inserting here, as a specimen of his quick-sightedness for the comic, and affluent ready narration:

"I am somehow reminded of a good story I heard the other night from a man who was a witness of it and an actor in it. At a certain German town, last autumn, there was a tremendous furore about Jenny Lind, who, after driving the whole place mad, left it, on her travels, early one morning. The moment her carriage was outside the gates a party of rampant students, who had escorted it, rushed

back to the inn, demanded to be shown to her bedroom, swept like a whirlwind up-stairs into the room indicated to them, tore up the sheets, and wore them in strips as decorations. An hour or two afterward a bald old gentleman of amiable appearance, an Englishman, who was staying in the hotel, came to breakfast at the *table d'hôte*, and was observed to be much disturbed in his mind, and to show great terror whenever a student came near him. At last he said, in a low voice, to some people who were near him at the table, 'You are English, gentlemen, I observe. Most extraordinary people these Germans! Students, as a body, raving mad, gentlemen!' 'O no,' said somebody else; 'excitable, but very good fellows, and very sensible.' 'By G—, sir!' returned the old gentleman, still more disturbed, 'then there's something political in it, and I'm a marked man. I went out for a little walk this morning after shaving, and while I was gone'—he fell into a terrible perspiration as he told it—'they burst into my bedroom, tore up my sheets, and are now patrolling the town in all directions with bits of 'em in their button-holes!' I needn't wind up by adding that they had gone to the wrong chamber."

A few lines written by Mr. Dickens after the death of Mr. Jerrold will be read with interest, as describing the pleasant side of a character usually reckoned (as Hawthorne reckoned him, and once told him to his face) "acrid;" and moreover, as showing that both the friends possessed that genuine manliness of character that can pass over an estrangement and fully re-establish a friendship. Mr. Dickens says:

"Few of his (Jerrold's) friends, I think, can have had more favorable opportunities of knowing him in his gentlest and most affectionate aspect than I have had. He was one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men. I remember very well that when I first saw him, in about the year 1835, when I went into his sick-room in Thistle Grove, Brompton, and found him propped up in a great chair, bright eyed, and quick, and eager in spirit, but very lame in body, he gave me an impression of tenderness. It never became dissociated from him. There was nothing cynical or cross in his heart, as I knew it. In the company of children and young people he was particularly happy, and showed to extraordinary advantage. He never was so gay, so sweet-tempered, so pleasing, and so pleased, as then. Among my own children I have observed this, many and many a time. When they and I came home from Italy, in 1845, your father went to Brussels to meet us, in company with our friends, Mr. Forster and Mr. Maclise. We all travelled together about Belgium for a little while, and all came home together. He was the delight of the children all the time, and they were his delight. He was in his most brilliant spirits, and I doubt if he were ever more humorous in his life. But the most enduring impression that he left upon us who are grown up—and we have all often spoken of it since—was, that Jerrold, in his amiable capacity of being easily pleased, in his freshness, in his good nature, in his cordiality, and in the unrestrained openness of his heart, had quite captivated us.

"Of his generosity I had a proof within two or three years, which saddens me to think of now. There had been an estrangement between us—not on any personal subject, and not involving any angry word—and a good many months had passed without my ever seeing him in the street, when it fell out that we dined each with his own separate party, in the Strangers' Room of a club. Our chairs were almost back to back, and I took mine after he was seated and at dinner. I said not a word (I am sorry to remember), and did not look that way. Before we had sat so long, he openly wheeled his chair round, stretched out both his hands in a most engaging manner, and said aloud, with a bright and loving face that I can see as I write to you, 'For God's sake, let us be friends again! A life's not long enough for this!'"

Mr. G. W. Curtis has told the following closely similar story of a reconciliation between Dickens and another friend, Mr. Mark Lemon, though on a more melancholy occasion:

"When Thackeray was buried, his friends, and among them the most noted of English authors, carried him to Kensal Green. There had been some estrangement between Dickens and Mark Lemon, and, as the coffin was lowered into its place, Dickens stood upon one side of the grave, and Lemon upon the other. As they raised their heads, their eyes met, and instinctively putting out their hands, they clasped them in forgiveness, and their quarrel was buried in the grave of Thackeray."

In the letter which Dickens wrote in 1841, to Mr.

Clarke, then editing the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, to announce his intended visit to America, there is the same friendly warmth as in his notes to his every-day brethren at home, and a characteristic, ready, personal sympathy with the recent loss of his correspondent, whose brother had just died:

"28th SEPTEMBER, 1841.

"MY DEAR SIR: I condole with you from my heart on the loss you have sustained, and I feel proud of your permitting me to sympathize with your affliction. It is a great satisfaction to me to have been addressed under similar circumstances by many of your countrymen since the *Old Curiosity Shop* came to a close. Some simple and honest hearts in the remote wilds of America, have written me letters on the loss of children, so numbering my little book or rather heroine, with their household gods; and so pouring out their trials and sources of comfort in them before me as a friend, that I have been inexpressibly moved, and am whenever I think of them, I do assure you. You have already all the comfort I could lay before you; all I hope, that the affectionate spirit of your brother, now in happiness, can shed into your soul. . . . . On the 4th of next January, if it please God, I am coming with my wife on a three or four months' visit to America. The British and North American packet will bring me, I hope, to Boston, and enable me in the third week of the new year to set my foot upon the soil I have trodden in my day-dreams many times, and whose sons (and daughters) I yearn to know and be among. I

hope you are surprised, and I hope, not unpleasantly
Faithfully yours, "CHARLES DICKENS."

Another American author, Charles Lanman, Esq., has published the following interesting reminiscences of the friendship between Mr. Dickens and a third American author, Washington Irving. There could hardly have been any other than an affectionate and thoroughly hearty admiration between two such good and genial natures as those of Dickens and Irving; and Mr. Lanman's narrative is graceful and easy; and Mr. Dickens's own recollection of the afternoon over the "enchanted julep," is delightfully humorsome and pleasant, and in respect of feeling description and composition, it is noticeable that it might have been written by Irving about Dickens exactly as well as by Dickens about Irving. This paper of Mr. Lanman's was first printed in the Washington *Chronicle:*

"The intercourse between them commenced in 1841, when Mr. Irving was in his fifty-eighth year, and Mr. Dickens had attained precisely half that number of years—twenty-nine. The American took the lead and wrote a letter expressing his heartfelt delight with the writings of the Englishman and his yearnings toward him. The reply was minute, impetuously kind, and eminently characteristic. 'There is no man in the world,' said Mr. Dickens, 'who would have given me the heartfelt pleasure you have. . . . . There is no living writer, and there are very few among the dead, whose approbation I should feel so proud to earn. And with everything

you have written upon my shelves, and in my thoughts and in my heart of hearts, I may honestly and truly say so. If you could know how earnestly I write this you would be glad to read it, as I hope you will be, faintly guessing at the warmth of the hand I *autobiographically* hold out to you over the broad Atlantic. . . . . I have been so accustomed to associate you with my pleasantest and happiest thoughts and with my leisure hours, that I rush at once into full confidence with you, and fall, as it were naturally, and by the very laws of gravity, into your open arms. . . . . I cannot thank you enough for your cordial and generous praise, or tell you what deep and lasting gratification it has given me.'

"In the winter of 1842, and while the literary public of New York were congratulating Mr. Irving on his appointment as Minister to Spain, the tide of excitement suddenly turned toward Mr. Dickens, who just then arrived in the city of Boston. Then it was that the two lions first met face to face; and for a few weeks, at Sunnyside, and in the delightful literary society which was a striking feature of New York life at that time, they saw as much of each other as circumstances would allow. Professor C. C. Felton, in his remarks on the death of Mr. Irving, before the Historical Society of Massachusetts, gave us some interesting recollections of this winter in New York. Among other things, he said: 'I passed much of the time with Mr. Irving and Mr. Dickens; and it was delightful to witness the cordial intercourse of the young man, in the flush and glory of his fervid genius, and his elder compeer, then in the

assured possession of immortal renown. Dickens said in his frank, hearty manner, that from his childhood he had known the works of Irving; and that before he thought of coming to this country, he had received a letter from him, expressing the delight he felt in reading the story of Little Nell.' "

"But the crowning event of the winter in question was the great dinner given to Mr. Dickens by his admirers at the old City Hotel. I was a mere boy at the time, a Pearl-street clerk, but through the kindness of certain friends the honor was granted to me of taking a look from a side-door at the august array of gifted authors before they were summoned to the sumptuous table. It was but a mere glimpse that I enjoyed; but while Mr. Irving, as presiding host, was sacrificing his sensitive nature for the gratification of his friend, and was, by breaking down in his speech of welcome, committing the only failure of his life, I retired to the quiet of my attic room, and spent nearly the whole of that night with Little Nell, the Broken Heart, and Marco Bozzaris, and drinking in the beauty and the comforting philosophy of Thanatopsis, all of them the matchless creations of those persons it had been my privilege to see. The little speech which Mr. Dickens delivered on that occasion was happy in the extreme, proving not only that he was familiar with the writings of Mr. Irving, but that he placed the highest value upon them; and before taking his seat he submitted the following toast: '*The Literature of America:* She well knows how to honor her own literature, to do honor to that of other lands, when

she chooses Washington Irving as her representative in the country of Cervantes.'"

Soon after the New York dinner, business called Mr. Irving to Washington, and Mr. Dickens made his arrangements to be there at the same time. At that place they renewed their friendly intercourse, laughed together at the follies of the politicians, enjoyed the companionship of the great triumvirs—Webster, Clay, and Calhoun—and were of course victimized at the President's receptions. On one occasion the honors were certainly divided between the two authors; and while we know that Mr. Dickens had no reason to complain of any want of attention on the part of the people, it is pleasant to read his comments upon the conduct of the assembled company toward Mr. Irving. "I sincerely believe," said he in his American Notes, "that in all the madness of American politics few public men would have been so earnestly, devotedly, and affectionately caressed as this most charming writer; and I have seldom respected a public assembly more than I did this eager throng, when I saw them turning with one mind from noisy orators and officers of State, and flocking, with a generous and honest impulse, around the man of quiet pursuits; proud in his promotion as reflected back upon their country, and grateful to him with their whole hearts for the store of graceful fancies he had poured out among them." From Washington, Mr. Dickens went upon a trip to Richmond, and on his return he made a doubtful appointment to meet Mr. Irving in Baltimore, and to that meeting I shall presently recur.

some anecdote involving some wonderfully droll and delicate observation of character), and then, as his eye caught mine, melting into that captivating laugh of his, which was the brightest and best I have ever heard.

"'Dear Sir, with many thanks, faithfully yours,

"'CHARLES DICKENS.

"'CHARLES LANMAN, Esq., Georgetown, D. C.'"

Dickens's friendship was by no means confined to professions. He was ready and generous with labor, influence, and money, according to his ability, for every one that needed help. After the loss of the steamer President in 1841, it was ascertained that the brilliant Irish comedian Tyrone Power, who was lost in her, had left a wife and family in need. A gentleman who knew the facts wrote to Mr. Dickens, and suggested the propriety of a public subscription for their assistance. Dickens immediately responded, enclosed a check for £100, wrote a letter to the *Times* newspaper—one of his characteristic letters—offered to receive any subscriptions that the public might forward him, and got Mr. Delane, the managing editor of the paper, to insert one of his powerful editorials in support of the appeal; and by the co-operation of the literary world of London, a sufficient sum was in less than a month raised to place poor Power's wife and family in comfortable circumstances.

On one occasion, Mr. Dickens's personal friend, the eminent actor Fechter, had been appearing at the Lyceum theatre with a brilliant result; every

evening his talent filled that house, which was only too small; but, as not unfrequently happens in theatrical experience, a full house left him with an empty cash-box. One evening he had a discussion with his manager, who incontestably proved to Fechter that he was some £3,000 in the manager's debt. Fechter had been under the impression that there was a balance of at least twice that amount on his side; but artists are in this like great lords—their men of business often trouble them with these unpleasant surprises. He went out rather angry and not a little embarrassed, for it was not at all to his taste to remain in this man's debt.

"How are you, Fechter, my dear fellow?" It was the cheery voice of Dickens, as he turned the corner of Covent Garden. Fechter told him with some feeling how he was situated. Dickens expressed no compassion, but shook hands and wished him good-night.

Fechter thought it hard, but such is friendship. Only the next morning the manager looked him up. "The matter was not so pressing as all that, my dear sir," said he.

"What do you mean?"

"Why, about that £3,000. Charles Dickens came and handed me the cash on your behalf at twelve o'clock last night."

One of his English eulogists thus discusses his friendship for artists:

"It will be remembered that on the occasion of the last Academy dinner, Mr. Dickens alluded in most affecting terms to the intimate friendship it

had been his happiness to maintain with Academicians, now no more. Choice works of many of these great artists hang on the walls of Gad's Hill. The list will be published shortly, and lovers of good pictures, admirers of the great writer who has gone, and men who love to have priceless associations environing their works of art, will be interested in the catalogue which is about to come forth. The anecdotes concerning Dickens's personal virtues, and the circumstances under which pictures were painted for him, so crowd upon us as we write, that the chief difficulty is to avoid saying too much. Will a great living painter of English manners, Mr. W. P. Frith, forgive an allusion to the early days when the success of his admirable picture of Dolly Varden led Charles Dickens to call upon him, and after expressing the warmest thanks for the feeling and appreciation which the artist's handiwork displayed, to give him a commission for other subjects, to be selected from the works of 'Boz?' This was before Mr. Frith had won academical honors, before his name had a world-wide reputation; but Dickens wanted on canvas, and in hues which should live, the young artist's conception of the imaginary people with whose characteristics England was ringing; for Dolly Varden had proved her limner's capacity in the eyes of the man best qualified to judge. Dickens's hearty approval of the pictures when painted, his personal introduction of himself to thank the artist, and his check, with the well-known signature, the 'C' rather like a 'G,' and the elaborate flourish beneath it, exactly as it is given outside the last edi-

tion of his works, are, we venture to say, like things of yesterday to Mr. Frith. Does the reader remember the touching obituary notice of Stanfield which Dickens penned, the affectionate appreciation of the delicate shades of the great maritime artist's character which that notice evinced, and the noble peroration with which it closed? The earnest wish displayed by the Queen to confer upon Dickens some title of honor, and the womanly refinement shown by Her Majesty in seeking to make that honor one which he could accept without derogating from his social principles, gives his parting words on Stanfield a not unkindly significance. It was after enumerating the artist's many claims to public distinction, after specifying several of his works by name, and after pointing to the recognition he would have received had he belonged to a foreign State, that Dickens said: 'It is superfluous to add that he died *Mr.* Stanfield—he was an Englishman. In the hall of the house at Gad's Hill Place hang some of Stanfield's masterpieces, to be dispersed with the works of Frith, of Egg, of Maclise, and of half a score other masters, equally well known, when the auctioneer's hammer falls."

The friendship between Dickens and Thackeray was a very genuine one; the two great authors sincerely admired and enjoyed each other's works. When Thackeray died, like Dickens, suddenly, and like him in the middle of a novel upon which he was expending unusual labor—Dickens published a brief memorial of him, in which he said:

"But on the table before me there lies all that he

had written of his latest and best story. That it would be very sad to any one—that it is inexpressibly sad to the writer—in its evidences of matured designs never to be accomplished, of intentions begun to be executed and destined never to be completed, of careful preparation for long roads of thought that he was never to traverse, and for shining goals that he was never to reach, will be readily believed. The pain, however, that I have felt in perusing it has not been deeper than the conviction that he was in the healthiest vigor of his powers when he wrought on this last labor. In respect of earnest feeling, farseeing purpose, character, incident, and a certain loving picturesqueness blending the whole, I believe it to be much the best of all his works. That he fully meant it to be so, that he had become strangely attached to it, and that he bestowed great pains upon it, I trace in almost every page. It contains one picture which must have caused him extreme distress, and which is a masterpiece. There are two children in it, touched with a hand as loving and tender as ever a father caressed his little child with. There is some young love as pure, and innocent, and pretty as the truth. And it is very remarkable that, by reason of the singular construction of the story, more than one main incident usually belonging to the end of such a fiction is anticipated in the beginning, and thus there is an approach to completeness in the fragment as to the satisfaction of the reader's mind concerning the most interesting persons, which could hardly have been better attained if the writer's breaking off had been foreseen.

"The last line he wrote, and the last proof he corrected, are among these papers through which I have so sorrowfully made my way. The condition of the little pages of manuscript, where death stopped his hand, shows that he had carried them about, and often taken them out of his pocket here and there for patient revision and interlineation. The last words he corrected in print were, 'And my heart throbbed with exquisite bliss.' God grant that on that Christmas-eve when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he had been wont to do when very weary, some consciousness of duty done and Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart so to throb when he passed away to his Redeemer's rest!"

Mr. Thackeray had before this more than once appeared in print as the eulogist or defender of Mr. Dickens. On one occasion he graphically described a portait of his friend, his double power as draughtsman and writer giving unusual distinctness to the picture.

It is only a fragment from Thackeray's papers, but it shows the appreciation which he had for his brother in letters:

"Look at the portrait of Mr. Dickens, well arranged as a picture, good in color, and light, and shadow, and as a likeness perfectly amazing; a looking-glass could not render a better fac-simile. Here we have the real indentical man Dickens; the artist must have understood the inward Boz as well as the outward before he made this admirable rep-

resentation of him. What cheerful intelligence there is about the man's eyes and large forehead! The mouth is too large and full, too eager and active, perhaps; the smile is very sweet and generous. If M. de Balzac, that voluminous physiognomist, could examine the head, he would, no doubt, interpret every line and wrinkle in it; the nose firm and well placed, the nostrils wide and full, as are the nostrils of all men of genius (this is M. de Balzac's maxim). The past and future, says Jean Paul, are written in every countenance. I think we may promise ourselves a brilliant future from this one. There seems no flagging as yet in it, no sense of fatigue or consciousness of decaying power. Long mayest thou, Boz! reign over thy comic kingdom; long may we pay tribute, whether of threepence weekly, or of a shilling monthly, it matters not. Mighty Prince! at thy imperial feet, Titmarsh, humblest of thy servants, offers his vows of loyalty, and his humble tribute of praise."

Mr. Thackeray's praise of Mr. Dickens, in his "Lectures on Charity and Humor," has been printed often, and here it is again. How humorous the critic's confession of his own little girl's preference for the other writer's books! and how genuine and unmistakable is the pleasure with which the praise is given!—

"As for the charities of Mr. Dickens, the multiplied kindnesses which he has conferred upon us all, upon our children, upon people educated and uneducated, upon the myriads here and at home, who speak our common tongue; have not you, have not I, all of us,

reason to be thankful to this kind friend, who soothed and charmed so many hours; brought pleasure and sweet laughter to so many homes; made such multitudes of children happy; endowed us with such a sweet store of gracious thoughts, fair fancies, soft sympathies, hearty enjoyments? There are creations of Mr. Dickens's which seem to me to rank as personal benefits; figures so delightful, that one feels happier and better for knowing them, as one does for being brought into the society of very good men and women. . . . . Was there ever a better charity sermon preached in the world than Dickens's 'Christmas Carol?' I believe it occasioned immense hospitality throughout England; was the means of lighting up hundreds of kind fires at Christmas-time; caused a wonderful outpouring of Christmas good feeling; of Christmas punch-brewing; an awful slaughter of Christmas turkeys, and roasting and basting of Christmas beef. As for this man's love of children, that amiable organ at the back of his honest head must be perfectly monstrous. All children ought to love him. I know two that do, and read his books ten times for once that they peruse the dismal preachments of their father. I know one who, when she is happy, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby;' when she is unhappy, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby;' when she is tired, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby;' when she is in bed, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby;' when she has nothing to do, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby;' and when she has finished the book, reads 'Nicholas Nickleby' over again. This candid young critic, at ten years of age, said, 'I like Mr. Dickens's books

much better than your books, papa;' and frequently expressed her desire that the latter author should write a book like one of Mr. Dickens's books. Who can? Every man must say his own thoughts in his own voice, in his own way. Lucky is he who has such a charming gift of nature as this, which brings all the children in the world trooping to him, and very fond of him. . . . I may quarrel with Mr. Dickens's art a thousand and a thousand times; I delight and wonder at his genius. I recognize in it —I speak with awe and reverence—a communication from that Divine Beneficence whose blessed task we know it will one day be to wipe every tear from every eye. Thankfully I take my share of the feast of love and kindness which this gentle, and generous, and charitable soul has contributed to the happiness of the world. I take and enjoy my share, and say a benediction for the meal."

In *Fraser's Magazine* for March, 1842, Mr. Thackeray gave an extremely ludicrous account of a French adaptation of "Nicholas Nickleby," for the Ambigu-Comique Théâtre. "Neekolass Neeklbee" he calls it, and laughable enough are a couple of designs from his own pencil that illustrate it. One of them is a picture of Neeklbee and "Smeek" departing from the "Paradis des Enfans" of Monsieur Squarrs; the character of Smeek being sustained by a young lady who does not at all answer the requirements of her part in point of skinniness. The French playwright took the most extraordinary liberties with his victim. There is a Lor Clarendon, father of Meess Annabel, the beloved of Neeklbee;

and Smeek turns out to be the son and heir, not of Ralph Nickleby, but of Lor Clarendon. There is an enormous subterranean vault, used by a gang of beggars and thieves, who are ruled by Ralph Nickleby in a mask; and there is Lor Beef, a companion of Lor Clarendon; and many other fearful scenes and personages very startling to anybody that has read the book.

Having described this wondrous production of the French literary Comprachico, Mr. Thackeray turns about and administers a terrific scourging to Jules Janin, the well-known French newspaper critic, who had condemned Mr. Dickens on the evidence of the French production, charging him with *immodesty*, of all things in the world for a Frenchman to be squeamish about! Janin could not read a word of English, for he said so in the preface of a French translation of Sterne's "Sentimental Journey," *which he helped to make.* And for a further elucidation of him, and in particular of his notions about modesty, Mr. Thackeray shows that he "is the man who, when he was married (in a week when news was slack, no doubt), actually *criticized his own marriage ceremony*, letting all the world see the proof-sheets of his bridal." . . . Also, that he calls "Clarissa Harlowe" "chaste," and thinks "Don Juan" not immoral, but only "animée"—animated. And finally he quotes Janin's summary of the demerits of the work, which will be found rather surprising. It is, saith M. Janin, "the most disgusting mixture imaginable of warm milk and sour beer, of fresh eggs and salt beef, of rags and laced clothes,

of gold crowns and coppers, of roses and dandelions." And again: "If you love the fumes of tobacco, the odor of garlic, the taste of fresh pork, the harmony of a pewter plate struck against an untinned copper saucepan, read me conscientiously this book of Charles Dickens. What sores! What pustules!"

There is more; but this is abundance to show what queer work the French *litterateurs* can make when they try, as well as how handsomely the English satirist flagellated one of them for it.

There is a pleasant story about one of Dickens's festive experiences, which shows a quickness and richness and readiness of imagination far more wonderful than the physical endurance and elasticity which enabled him to play at leap-frog at seven in the morning after sitting up all night. It is told by a hearty admirer, who, after various instances of his interest in useful and benevolent public enterprises, thus continues:

"But, good as he was, the genial side of his nature shone out with pre-eminent brilliancy. He was what Dr. Johnson would have called 'a clubable man,' in the true sense of the term; ever ready to enter into the whim which for the moment pleased the company best, and to add his ever-flowing humor to the common amusement. We must not forget a laughable incident at the Garrick's Head, a rather noted tavern of the older type, in Bow-street, London. It was late in the evening. Father Prout, the inimitable wit, was at that hour, as usual, smoking a long 'Churchwarden;' the late John Lang, editor of *The*

Mofussilite (of Upper India), author of the 'Ex-Wife,' and many other excellent novels; Mr. W. B. B. Stevens, solicitor to the late Sir Robert Peel; George Grant, ex-judge of the Judder Adawlut (Bombay); Mr. I. H. Stocqueler, and Mr. Thornton Hunt, the editor of the London *Telegraph*, were all, if the truth must be told, slightly under the influence of the different liquids they had imbibed during the evening. Mr. Lang was counsel for defence in the celebrated case of Jootee Pursaud against the Bengal government, and for which he received a fee of two lakhs of rupees (£20,000 or $100,000); he was at the same time one of the most brilliant wits and poets in India, and one of the ablest relators of anecdotes in Europe. At this little supper Father Prout, by a series of manœuvres, elicited story after story of real facts and scenes experienced by the India barrister and journalist, treasured in his extraordinary memory, and told with all his wealth of fancy and humor. Dickens capped story after story with his own. When Lang was mournful, Dickens was pathetic; when Lang was in earnest, Dickens was solemn; when Lang was merry, Dickens literally boiled over with fun, and the most singular thing was that all Dickens's stories were laid in Bengal, and the northwest provinces of India, with which Lang was thoroughly familiar. Every minute detail was told with such vivid accuracy that the whole party were astonished, and Mr. Lang refused to believe that Dickens had never been in India, for while his own stories were founded on fact, Dickens's were the fruit of the imagination of the moment. This,

perhaps, showed his versatility more than anything he has published."

"He was a man of practical charity," says one who knew him well both here and abroad, "and gave large sums judiciously every year. Indeed, he would get up in the night and go ten miles to aid any one who was suffering."

It was by no means necessary, in order to receive kindness or civility from Dickens, to be of high rank, great influence, or already known to him. "In 1842," writes one who knew him personally, "I was staying with a gentleman named Thomas Withers, at Romney, in England. He was a printer by trade, and a man of original genius. He printed a work from the dictation of his own mind, without one word of a written manuscript. It was entitled 'The Beauties of Creation.' I believe no man ever performed such a task before. He sent a copy of the work to Dickens. I saw his reply. He said: 'No work in my library shall I set greater store by, not only on account of its intrinsic merit, but because I consider it one of the greatest literary curiosities in England. Permit me to ask your acceptance of the handsomest edition I have of the literary trifles I have written, which the kindness of the people of England has received with a too partial approbation.'"

He [illegible] the ready friend and efficient helper [illegible] orises. A writer who has [illegible] peaks of his willing acti[illegible]

"[illegible]erhaps, far from

strictly temperate in his habits, was a warm friend and constant advocate of all measures or projects aimed at the diminution of the national vice of drunkenness. During the great agitation of the temperance movement in 1857, Lord Shaftesbury, Mr. Dickens, Mr. Fawcett, and Mr. John Stuart Mill, met together in one of the rooms adjoining St. James Hotel, to devise a scheme for meeting the increased and increasing evils, which Lord Shaftesbury argued were the result of the excitement caused by the Crimean war, and the return of the soldiers from active service. It was a singular quartette. Lord Shaftesbury, the representative of the Evangelical laymen of England; John Stuart Mill, one of the most recondite thinkers of modern times; Mr. Fawcett, an acute mathematician, a politician of the most advanced school, and completely blind; Mr. Dickens, the good-humored, genial painter of scenes drawn from every-day life, the novelist par excellence—and singularly enough, it was the pen of the latter that wrote the rough draft of the ideas and spirit of the numerous pamphlets upon the subject which flooded England during 1858 and 1859. Another social reform, the chief credit of which must be given to him, is the spread of the principles of life assurance through the masses. Every year in *Household Words*, and subsequently in *All the Year Round*, he published a series of articles demonstrating the practical advantage of prudent life assurance, and with invincible logic, but in plain and homely language, combated the objections which prejudice and dullness and

selfish fear have raised among a large body of the people against the theory and practice of life assurance. Many a family would now be destitute had it not been for the foresight inculcated by Charles Dickens. And this led him to the consideration of other topics of a kindred nature, such as building societies, savings banks, mutual benefit associations, and the creation of funds for the support of the widows and orphans of different guilds, societies, or professions. At the dinners given by the Dramatic Society, Art Society, the Press Society, and the Printers' Association, all of which more or less resemble savings banks, Charles Dickens was one of the most earnest, most popular, and most convincing speakers—one who, by his tongue, seemed to perfect the work his pen, more than that of any other's, had begun."

As might have been expected, his neighbors loved him. One account says:

"He was extremely popular in the place where he lived, and when he returned from America the neigboring farmers draped their houses with flags to receive him."

The following address by Mr. Dickens, as chairman at an anniversary meeting of the London "News-venders' Benevolent Institution," shows how skilfully and gracefully he met the requirements of such a position. He introduced the toast of the evening with the following happy speech:

"Ladies and gentlemen, you receive me with so much cordiality that I fear you believe that I really did once ride in the Lord Mayor's stage-coach. Permit

me to assure you, in spite of the information received by Mr. Alderman Cotton, that I never had that honor. Furthermore, I beg to assure you that I never witnessed a Lord Mayor's Show, except from the situation obtained by other vagabonds on the pavement. In spite of this great cordiality of yours, I doubt if you fully know what a blessing it is for you that I occupy the chair to-night, because, having on several former occasions filled it on behalf of this society, and having said everything I could think of to say about it, and being, moreover, its president, I am placed to-night rather in the modest position of the host, who is not so much to display himself as to bring out his guests,—perhaps even to try to induce some to occupy his place on another occasion. And therefore you may be safely assured that, like Falstaff, but with a modification of the quotation almost as large as himself, I shall endeavor rather to be the cause of speaking in others than to speak myself. Much in this manner they exhibit at the door of a snuff-shop the effigy of a Highlander with an empty mull in his hand, who, having apparently taken all the snuff he can carry, and discharged all the sneezes of which he is capable, politely invites passers-by to step in and try what they can do in the same line. It is an appropriate instance of the universality of the newsman's calling, that no toast we have drunk to-night, no toast we shall drink to-night, and no toast we might, could, should, or would drink on any other night, is inseparable from that epitome of all possible subjects of human interest which the newsman delivers at our doors every day.

Further, it may be worth the consideration of everybody present who has talked cheerfully to his or her neighbor since we sat down at the table, what in the name of Heaven should we have talked about, and how possibly should we have got on if our newsman had only for one single day forgotten us. As our newsman is not in the habit of forgetting us, let us try to cultivate the habit of not forgetting our newsman. Let us remember that his work is very arduous, that it occupies him early and late, that the profits he derives from it are very small, that if he be master his capital is exposed to all sorts of hazard, and if he be a journeyman he himself is exposed to all sorts of weather and temper, and all sorts of unreasonable requirements. I was once present in company where the question was asked, What is the most absorbing and the longest-lived passion of the human breast? and an editor of vast experience, who was present, stated, with the greatest confidence, and supported his argument by proof, that it was the desire to obtain orders for the theatre. This made a great impression upon me, and I really lived in this faith for some time; but it happened on one stormy night I was kindly escorted from a bleak railway-station to the little town which it represented by a sprightly and vivacious newsman. To him I propounded the question as he went along under my umbrella,—What is the one absorbing passion of the human soul? He replied, without the slightest hesitation, that it certainly was the passion for getting your newspaper in advance of your fellow-creatures. Also, if you only hired it, to have it

delivered at your door at exactly the same moment as another man who hired the same copy and lived four miles off; and finally, the invincible determination on the part of each man not to believe that the time was up when the boy called for it. Well, as a sort of beacon in a sufficiently dark life, and as an assurance that there is among all classes of men a bond of brotherhood, the news-venders once upon a time established a benevolent and provident institution. Under the provident head some small annuities are granted, and under the benevolent head relief is granted to temporary and proved distress. Under both heads I am bound to say that the aid is very humble and very sparing; but if you would like it to be more, you have it in your power to make it so. Such as it is, it is most gratefully received, and it is most discreetly and feelingly administered, and it is encumbered with no wasteful charges for management. During the last year we granted £100 in pensions and £70 in temporary relief, and we have invested in government securities some £400. I leave the interest of the institution in your hands, with the concluding observation, that it has had the good fortune to attract the sympathy of the eminent man of letters who now represents America at the court of St. James's, and that it includes in the number of its vice-presidents the great name of Longfellow."

An English writer says, in describing Mr. Dickens's kindness as an editor, and general sweetness of disposition:

"It was Dickens's rare art to bring the best out of

a man, and by kindly encouragement and generous appreciation to secure a coöperation which was affectionate as well as zealous. 'Whatever you see your way to, I will see mine to, and we know and understand each other well enough to make the best of these conditions,' was his recent reply to a contributor who had proposed to send him a series of articles. He liked his literary staff to feel unfettered, and when he was once satisfied that the instrument to his hand was well-tempered and true, he rejoiced in giving it play. Now and then, when some great public wrong fired him, he would pour out his indignation with a fertility of illustration which no one has commanded in our time but himself; and he never faltered in protesting against wrong, or leaned unduly to a winning side. How tender he was to the poor, how considerate to the weak, how merciful, how truly great, it must be left to other pens to tell. This faltering record fulfils its purpose in recording that he has been buried with all honor, and in the very way he would have chosen; that those whom he has left know their loss to be irreparable, and that they turn to the pure thoughts and tender fancies he has given to the world, and tearfully seek in them, and in words yet more sacred, some alleviation to their pain."

Another, who had himself experienced the kind manner he describes, says:

"In 1846 the *Daily News* was established in London, and Charles Dickens became its editor. I obtained a position on the staff of the paper, acting in various humble capacities, and occasionally tried my

hand in writing articles on literature, art, and politics. Like all youthful aspirants for fame in the journalistic world of the great city of London, I was frequently doomed to have my articles rejected by the editor-in-chief. But never shall I forget the kindness of Charles Dickens when it was his duty to tell me the 'article' could not be inserted. He saw the disappointment that was agitating me, but the tender smile, the kind words of encouragement that he used to utter, will ever be engraven in my memory."

And Mr. Smalley, the cool and judicious European editor of *The New York Tribune*, in a very well written article on Dickens, thus refers to his friends and enemies:

"Putting aside his public life, you find in these narratives of his friends so much tenderness that it is easy to see the man was loved, not for his great gifts and universal fame, but for those personal qualities which you find indeed in his books, but which are sweeter in private life than in any public expression. He had plenty of enemies, indeed. No man rises to his height in literature without making them. They are known well enough in London. I could name two or three in the next line who would be known also in America, but they are as silent to-day as he who is dead. On the other hand, if I should begin to make a catalogue of the famous men in literature, in art, in politics, in science, who are among the dear and honored friends of Dickens, I should scarcely leave unmentioned one really great name among the Englishmen of to-day."

Mr. Henry F. Chorley, the well-known musical critic, speaks in the following enthusiastic terms of Mr. Dickens's benevolence:

"The munificent sacrifices he made of time, money, and sympathy to men of letters, to artists, to obscure persons who had not the shadow of a shade of a claim on him, will never be summed up. There are thousands of persons living who could bear grateful testimony to this boundless generosity of his nature."

With all his kindness, however, Mr. Dickens had —what every man needs—plenty of wrath and indignation and fight. He would not be bullied, he would not be driven from any position he had taken, he was fearless in exposing or punishing, when he thought proper to expose or punish. The anger of the Americans at the "American Notes" did not at all interfere with his repeating the substance of the offence, a hundred times intensified, in "Martin Chuzzlewit." When Chapman & Hall refused him some money that he wanted, he immediately took his business away from them; and it has been computed that by refusing that £1,000, they lost £50,000.

When he was editing *Bentley's Miscellany* he was not at all indulgent to the usually somewhat silly questions that he had to deal with in writing the "Answers to Correspondents," but showed a visible irritability in them. In dealing with the "begging letters," which are a department of English professional mendicancy, and which are an invariable annoyance to eminently popular persons, he was

pretty peremptory. Like Mr. Greeley, Mr. Beecher, and others, Mr. Dickens was most vigorously persecuted in his own right by beggars of every possible description. He had the advantage of them, however, in having been additionally persecuted on the account of the Brothers Cheeryble. He mentioned in the original preface to "Nicholas Nickleby" that these old twins were real characters (they were Messrs. William and Daniel Grant of Manchester); and he adds, "If I were to attempt to sum up the hundreds upon hundreds of letters, from all sorts of people in all sorts of latitudes and climates, to which this unlucky paragraph has since given rise, I should get into an arithmetical difficulty from which I could not easily extricate myself. Suffice it to say, that I believe the applications for loans, gifts, and offices of profit which I have been requested to forward to the originals of the Brothers Cheeryble (with whom I never interchanged any communications in my life), would have exhausted the combined patronage of all the Lord Chancellors since the accession of the House of Brunswick, and would have broken the Rest of the Bank of England." In April, 1850, he made a general declaration against the begging-letter writers, in which he stated his experience with them ever since he began to be famous in 1836, beginning thus:

"I, the writer of this paper, have been, for some time, a chosen receiver of begging-letters. For fourteen years my home has been made as regular a receiving-house for such communications as any one of the great branch post-offices is for general

correspondence. I ought to know something of the begging-letter writer. He has besieged my door at all hours of the day and night; he has fought my servant; he has lain in ambush for me, going out and coming in; he has followed me out of town into the country; he has appeared at provincial hotels, where I have been staying for only a few hours; he has written to me from immense distances, when I have been out of England. He has fallen sick, he has died, and been buried; he has come to life again, and again departed from this transitory scene; he has been his own son, his own mother, his own baby, his idiot mother, his uncle, his aunt, his aged grandmother. He has wanted a great coat, to go to India in; a pound, to set him up in life forever; a pair of boots, to take him to the coast of China; a hat, to get him into a permanent situation under government."

There was a good deal more, and a very entertaining picture of these beggars it was; but they do not seem to have been discouraged, for a little after the attack already mentioned, which caused Mr. Dickens to give up his reading so suddenly at Preston, he gave them the benefit of another sarcastic exposition. On this occasion he also administered a good scorching to another class of plagues who are, if possible, more abominable than beggars, to wit, people who give advice when they have no business to give it. In an article called "A Fly-Leaf in a Life," discussing this attack and the solicitude of the public to account for it, Mr. Dickens favors the two sorts of pests in question with the following description:

"But while I so rested, thankfully recovering every hour, I had experiences more odd than this. I had experiences of spiritual conceit, for which, as giving me a new warning against that curse of mankind, I shall always feel grateful to the supposition that I was too far gone to protest against playing sick lion to any stray donkey with an itching hoof. All sorts of people seemed to become vicariously religious at my expense. I received the most uncompromising warning that I was a Heathen; on the conclusive authority of a field preacher, who, like the most of his ignorant and vain and daring class, could not construct a tolerable sentence in his native tongue or pen a fair letter. This inspired individual called me to order roundly, and knew in the freest and easiest way where I was going to, and what would become of me if I failed to fashion myself on his bright example, and was on terms of blasphemous confidence with the Heavenly Host. He was in the secrets of my heart, and in the lowest soundings of my soul—he!—and could read the depths of my nature better than his A B C, and could turn me inside out, like his own clammy glove. But what is far more extraordinary than this—for such dirty water as this could alone be drawn from such a shallow and muddy source—I found from the information of a beneficed clergyman, of whom I never heard and whom I never saw, that I had not, as I rather supposed I had, lived a life of some reading, contemplation, and inquiry; that I had not studied, as I rather supposed I had, to inculcate some Christian lessons in books; that I had never tried,

as I rather supposed I had, to turn a child or two tenderly toward the knowledge and love of our Saviour; that I had never had, as I rather supposed I had had, departed friends, or stood beside open graves; but that I had lived a life of 'uninterrupted prosperity,' and that I needed this 'check, overmuch,' and that the way to turn it to account was to read these sermons and these poems, enclosed, and written and issued by my correspondent! I beg it may be understood that I relate facts of my own uncommercial experience, and no vain imaginings. The documents in proof lie near my hand.

"Another odd entry on the fly-leaf, of a more entertaining character, was the wonderful persistency with which kind sympathizers assumed that I had injuriously coupled with the so suddenly relinquished pursuit, those personal habits of mine most obviously incompatible with it, and most plainly impossible of being maintained, along with it. As, all that exercise, all that cold bathing, all that wind and weather, all that uphill training—all that everything else, say, which is usually carried about by express-trains in a portmanteau and hat-box, and partaken of under a flaming row of gas-lights in the company of two thousand people. This assuming of a whole case against all facts and likelihood, struck me as particularly droll, and was an oddity of which I certainly had had no adequate experience in life until I turned that curious fly-leaf.

"My old acquaintances the begging-letter writers came out on the fly-leaf, very piously indeed. They were glad, at such a serious crisis, to offer me

another opportunity of sending that post-office order. I needn't make it a pound, as previously insisted on; ten shillings might ease my mind. And Heaven forbid that they should refuse, at such an insignificant figure, to take a weight off the memory of an erring fellow-creature! One gentleman, of an artistic turn (and copiously illustrating the books of the Mendicity Society), thought it might sooth my conscience in the tender respect of gifts misused, if I would immediately cash up in aid of his lowly talent for original design—as a specimen of which he enclosed me a work of art which I recognize as a tracing from a woodcut originally published in the late Mrs. Trollope's book on America forty or fifty years age. The number of people who were prepared to live long years after me, untiring benefactors to their species, for fifty pounds a piece down, was astonishing. Also, of those who wanted bank notes for stiff penitential amounts, to give away—not to keep, on any account.

"Divers wonderful medicines and machines insinuated recommendations for themselves into the fly-leaf that was to have been so blank. It was especially observable that every prescriber, whether in a moral or physical direction, knew me thoroughly—knew me from head to heel, in and out, through and through, upside down. I was a glass piece of general property, and everybody was on the most surprisingly intimate terms with me. A few public institutions had complimentary perceptions of corners in my mind, of which, after considerable self-examination, I have not discovered any indication.

Neat little printed forms were addressed to those corners, beginning with these words: 'I give and bequeath.'

"Will it seem exaggerative to state my belief that the most honest, the most modest, and the least vain-glorious of all the records upon this strange fly-leaf, was a letter from the self-deceived discoverer of the recondite secret 'how to live four or five hundred years?' Doubtless it will seem so, yet the statement is not exaggerative by any means, but is made in my serious and sincere conviction. With this, and with a laugh at the rest that shall not be cynical, I turn the fly-leaf, and go on again."

As he could be indignant, so he was always independent. He has been often called by that disagreeable English nickname "snob;" and Mr. Hawthorne (whose observations about him are all at second hand) says of him: "Charles Dickens, who, born a plebeian, aspires to aristocratic society." But his frank fellowship with his literary brethren, with newspaper workers and venders, in short, with human beings generally as such, does not look like snobbery at all; neither does his gallery of aristocratic portraits look like that of a painter who sought to please. If Mr. Dickens had "aspired to aristocratic society" he would have furnished some pictures of another sort than Lord Frederic Verisopht and Sir Mulberry Hawk, Sir John Chester, Sir Leicester Dedlock, the Barnacles, and the Stiltstalkings. But there is nothing to offset them. And it is a matter of record that he would not submit to even a discourtesy of form, even from his sovereign,

and that sovereign a lady, and a lady personally so honored and beloved as Victoria. Mr. Smalley thus tells the story of the occurrence, and of the subsequent friendship, honorable to both parties:

"Among his sincere mourners is the Queen. The relations between her and Mr. Dickens were once so far from being true, that Mr. Dickens felt himself obliged to decline an invitation to the Court. He was, in fact, invited as an amateur actor and reader, but being invited only as such, refused. With a sense of the dignity of his profession, only too rare in England, he said that while he yielded to nobody in proper respect for his sovereign, he would not enter any house professionally where he could not be received on equal terms socially. It was the ridiculous punctilio of some gold-stick-in-waiting that stood between the Queen and Mr. Dickens, and it happened so long ago, that it is only worth remembering, to show how much wiser the Queen has proved in such matters than her counsellors. She put aside, or probably there was no need to put aside, the foolish suggestions of etiquette, and of late years the Queen has welcomed Mr. Dickens to her house, as she welcomes any other guest of distinction. There had grown up between them a feeling of personal friendship. The Queen sent him her book, with a graceful note saying how unworthy such a trifle was of the acceptance of him who was the chief among the writers of her time. Mr. Dickens, not long before his death, gave to the Queen a copy of the library edition of his works. She put it in her private cabinet, and asked Mr. Helps to let

Mr. Dickens know that his gift was placed where it would be always plainest in her sight and readiest to her hand. The letter containing this message reached the great novelist's home while he lay slowly dying and unconscious. It is known that public honors have been pressed by the Queen and her advisers upon Mr. Dickens. After what he said at Liverpool last year, he could not well be offered a peerage, but he might have had that or any lesser title if he would. Times have changed a little since Macaulay was happy and proud to accept what Dickens could refuse without pride or offense, but simply because he thought the dignity unsuited to him. When he had gratefully declined everything else, the Queen asked him to accept a seat in her Privy Council. If he would not have that either, I presume it was because it confers the title of Right Honorable, and he preferred to be simply Charles Dickens. Intelligence of his death was sent by telegraph to Balmoral, and Col. Ponsonby, one of the household officers, replied, 'The Queen commands me to express her deepest regret at the sad news of Charles Dickens's death.'"

In like manner as manly strength and positive self-respect upheld his kindness and jovial friendship, so manly common sense, the most regular, personal, and business habits, and uncommon tact and ability as a business man, upheld and reinforced his literary and creative genius.

"When in London, he lived mostly at the Garrick Club, where he filled as large a place as John Dryden used to fill at Will's Coffee-house. There was,

at one time, some alarm created lest he should leave the Garrick, in consequence, as it was whispered, of the fact that one of his friends and publishers had been black-balled there; but the trouble was composed, and the Garrick knew him to the last. His town apartments were comfortably fitted up, but were not in the fashionable quarter. They constituted the second floor of the house in Wellington-street, Strand, the lower part of which was occupied by the business offices of *All the Year Round.* Mayfair saw little of Dickens, nor was Belgravia one of his familiar haunts. We believe he was never presented at court; but it was not long ago, since his last return from the United States, that the Queen invited him to come and see her, and he spent a day with her at Windsor Castle."

When in London, Dickens might be seen at dinner more frequently than anywhere else at Verey's, a restaurant in the upper part of Regent-street, where, often with Wilkie Collins, he sat at a little table in the corner reserved for him especially by the *maitre d'hôtel.*

"Whatever," says *The Daily News*, "he said should be done, those who knew him regarded as accomplished. There was no forgetfulness, no procrastination, no excuse, when the time for granting a promised favor came. His hours and days were spent by rule. He rose at a certain time, he retired at another, and, though no precisian, it was not often that his arrangements varied. His hours for writing were between breakfast and luncheon, and when there was work to be done no temptation was suffi-

ciently strong to cause it to be neglected. This order and regularity followed him through the day. His mind was essentially methodical, and in his long walks, in his recreations, in his labor, he was governed by rules laid down for himself by himself, rules well studied beforehand, and rarely departed from.

In the reminiscences, already quoted, of Mr. Mitchell, he gives this interesting time-table of Mr. Dickens's usual day at Gad's Hill, and of his way of living:

"The popular notion that Mr. Dickens died from irregularities of life we believe unfounded. He was a generous liver, in the English sense of that term. He loved a good dinner. He kept a French cook. He took wine with his dinner habitually, and very likely a sip of Cognac after dinner—in the manner of nine out of ten Englishmen whose style of living was on the same scale with his.

"But, on the other hand, he was most methodic in his habits. He indulged in no stimulants to quicken his working power, or before the hour of dinner, at six P.M.

"He rose ordinarily at seven, or thereabout; devoted an hour to his mail and correspondence; breakfasted in the free and easy way which belongs to most English country-houses; lit a cigar in the closing breakfast hour, and, that done, went to his study and his work—denying, ordinarily, all interruptions until one or two o'clock of the afternoon.

"In this period of work—as he has told us—he never smoked, and never employed an amanuensis.

Every word of all his great array of volumes has been written out in his own hand.

"The morning's work being over, he set out upon his tramp—fifteen miles of walk as a usual thing with him; and thirty miles of walk no uncommon thing.

"He entertained the idea that mental fatigue and labor could be balanced by corresponding physical exercise—an idea that has a measure of truth in it, if the balance be adroitly kept. But with Mr. Dickens the balance was not kept; for on these long walks the creatures of his brain were his daily attendants, and while he strode away over the Kentish meadows, he was calculating the issues of his stories and fabricating scenes that were next day to take color in his words."

Mr. Smalley, whose appreciative and sensible letter about Dickens has already been praised and used in these pages, gives the following little narrative of the proposition made to Mr. Dickens to write a novel expressly for an American audience, and of the reasons in our statute law which prevented him from doing so:

"My acquaintance with Mr. Dickens was slight, and I cannot add much out of my personal knowledge of him to the general store. I first met him in 1866. A friend had given me a note of introduction, which brought me an invitation to call on him the next day at the office of *All the Year Round* in Wellington-street, Strand. My errand was not one of curiosity, but of business. *The Tribune* wanted him to write a novel for its readers. He was very wil-

ling to do it, and was pleased by a request of that sort coming from the leading journal of America. I don't know whether his last visit had then been planned, but he talked about the country and the people in a tone which struck me as a pleasing contrast to that which many English friends of ours assume. He did not think it necessary to patronize the United States. As to the novel meant to have been written for us, its failure was due to a cause which I beg to commend to such people as still oppose, no matter for what reason, an act of legislation that honest men on both sides of the water are agreed in demanding. Mr. Dickens had closely studied the law in respect to copyright between England and America. He was of opinion that it was not possible to convey to us or reserve to himself the legal property in a novel to be written by him in England and published by *The Tribune* in America. We have to thank the party which believes in piracy for preventing Mr. Dickens from writing what I think he was sincerely desirous of writing, a novel expressly composed for his friends in America."

The shrewdness which suggested the "serial" method of publication to Mr. Dickens has already been referred to; and his regularity and solicitous and effective supervision of his periodical has also been described. Mr. Smalley, in describing his further conversation with Mr. Dickens, furnishes other striking details on the subject. He says:

"This interview lasted for perhaps an hour and a half, and as the talk turned mainly on business, it is natural that I should have remarked the very unu-

sual business capacity which Mr. Dickens showed. Then and afterward, to me as to other casual acquaintances, he spoke freely about his own affairs. I presume it is not generally known that he has for many years been his own publisher. Messrs. Chapman & Hall's names appear on the title-pages of his books, but they have been only Mr. Dickens's agents. He owned the copyright of every one of his novels. In early days, it is true, before his fame had increased, and before the property in any one of his novels had become a fortune, he had sold his rights as author in a considerable number of his books. All these he repurchased, often by dint of great trouble, and by difficult negotiations, always at a price far beyond that which they had brought in the beginning. It was not only a matter of calculation with Mr. Dickens, it was a matter of pride. His books are his children; he did not want them in a stranger's hand, nor subject to the authority of anybody but their author. The copyrights were much dispersed, and when it became known that Mr. Dickens was bent on buying them up, the price, which was already high, advanced very considerably. The British book publisher is just as capable of driving a hard bargain as his American rival, and Mr. Dickens had to pay dearly for his discovery of that interesting fact. At last he carried his point, and held in his own grasp by a good legal title all his earlier writings. With the later ones he had never parted; with none, I suppose, during the last twenty years. Every six months Messrs. Chapman & Hall handed in their accounts. It was Mr. Dickens who

settled the terms of publication, the form in which each successive edition should appear, and all other details. What is called the Charles Dickens edition was his idea and his favorite, not on account of its beauty or readableness, for it is printed compactly in small type, but on account of its cheapness. What pleased him was that everybody should be able to buy a complete set of his writings, and so he had them all condensed into, I think, seventeen volumes, separately published and sold at three shillings and sixpence each. He understood the market, studied it, and adapted the supply of his books to the demand. He told me four years ago that the copyright of each one of his books became every year more valuable; that is, brought in more actual money. It is to be regretted that there is no really satisfactory edition among the many that have appeared. I think it was always Mr. Dickens's intention to issue his complete works in a form worthy of their place in literature; perhaps after what is now called the library edition had been exhausted, or the stereotype plates from which it is printed worn out; or perhaps after the series had grown more complete in his own mind, and better satisfied his restless eagerness for work."

Like the scrupulous honor of a good business man was the laborious faithfulness with which this wonderful genius and even improvisatore, instead of trusting to the "inspiration of the moment" which younger and smaller minds sometimes venture to wait for, was accustomed to prepare himself. The *News*, in referring to the difficulty of working

which Mr. Dickens began to experience over his last book, says, on this point:

"When Mr. Dickens complained of his work giving him trouble, we may be sure that the cause prompting the remark was not slight, for no writer set before himself more laboriously the task of giving the public his very best. A great artist, who once painted his portrait while he was in the act of writing one of the most popular of his stories, relates that he was astonished at the trouble Dickens seemed to take over his work, at the number of forms in which he would write down a thought before he hit out the one which seemed to his fastidious fancy the best, and at the comparative smallness of the amount of manuscript each day's sitting seemed to have produced. Those, too, who have seen the original manuscript of his works, many of which he had bound and kept at his residence at Gad's Hill, describe them as full of interlineations and alterations; while it is well known that the quaint surnames of his characters, concerning which essays have been written, were the result of much painstaking.

"Dickens, with a genius which might have justified his trusting it implicitly and solely, placed his chief reliance on his own hard labor."

In like manner, the following account of his way of life, during his readings in America, shows his astonishingly vivid sense of the obligation to work hard and do his best. But the truth is, whatever may be the vulgar notion about genius, that so far from being above the necessity of honest exertion, it

might almost be said that its very essence is honest exertion. It might almost be defined as industry, white hot. The Boston narrator wrote:

"His rooms are at the Parker House, and there he has remained busily engaged all day in writing and study, excepting when he is engaged in taking his daily eight-mile 'constitutional' walk with his publisher, Fields, and steadily declining all the invitations to breakfast, dinner, tea, supper, parties, balls, and drives that hospitable Boston pours in upon him in an unfailing stream. Most of his time is spent in the most laborious, pains-taking study of the parts he is to read. Indeed, the public has but little idea of the cost—in downright hard work of mind, body, and voice—at which these readings are produced. Although Mr. Dickens has read now nearly five hundred times, I am assured, on the best authority, that he never attempted a new part in public until he had spent at least two months over it in study as faithful and searching as Rachel or Cushman would give to a new character. This study extends not merely to the analysis of the text, to the discrimination of character, to the minutest points of elocution; but decides upon the facial expression, the tone of the voice, the gesture, the attitude, and even the material surroundings of the actor, for acting it is, not reading, in the ordinary sense, at all. Mr. Dickens is so essentially an artist that he cannot neglect the slightest thing that may serve to heighten the effect of what he has undertaken to do. And he is so conscientious, so strict in his dealings—a very martinet in business and thorough man of affairs—

that he will leave nothing undone that time and labor can do, to give to the public that pays so much for the pleasure of hearing him the full worth of its money. This is the reason why he, a man of the world, greatly delighting in society, thoroughly fitted to enjoy it himself, deliberately cuts himself off from it until his task shall be done. 'I am come here,' he says, 'to read. The people expect me to do my best, and how can I do it if I am all the time on the go? My time is not my own, when I am preparing to read, any more than it is when I am writing a novel; and I can as well do one as the other, without concentrating all my powers on it till it is done.'"

Mr. Dickens is supposed to have left a fortune of somewhere about £60,000, say $300,000. Had he been parsimonious, or even saving, it would have been many times greater.

A very moderate acquaintance with Mr. Dickens's writings will suffice to explain his general views and ways of thinking. He was always a liberal and a reformer in the interests of humanity, but without bigotry or sectarianism. He was a "wide liker," more ready to praise than to blame, to think good rather than evil, to hope rather than to despair.

About his religious character a good deal has been said, and some of it in such a way that it would not be proper to omit some brief consideration of the subject, chiefly with reference to a single question. The nature of that question may be gathered from the following facts:

Some years ago, the Scotch sensational essayist, Gilfillan, in a lecture at Liverpool, plainly charged that Dickens was an immoral writer, so far as the influence of his books was concerned; and the reason which he gave was, that Dickens nowhere recognizes the doctrine of eternal punishment.

A very respectable religious newspaper, the Chicago *Advance*, trying to be as mild in censure as conscience will permit, and framing its charges with great caution, says:

"We should not be true to our most sacred convictions did we not express regret that Mr. Dickens did not manifest more appreciation of the gospel of Jesus Christ as a remedy for sin, and as an elevating power in human society. He did not attack or deride it. He did not seek to undermine it. We believe that in his heart he had a deep reverence for its truth and work. But he was too nearly silent in its praise, while he described and even caricatured the faults of its professors, and represented his purest and most attractive characters as having everything by a mere natural goodness, and as living without reference to the Church of Christ, or habitual prayer to God."

Other religious newspapers of similar standing have expressed a like grief at the "absence of the religious element" in his writings; the *Watchman and Reflector*, for instance, observing: "It is sad that the really Christian element is lacking in his pages."

A less intelligent and respectable newspaper, the Pittsburg *United Presbyterian*, has put the case thus:

"A writer of low life, the author of a class of fiction that does nothing for language, literature, or morals, he has contributed but lightly to the real good of his race, and deserves only partial regret now that he has gone. When Dickens visited this country, over a year ago, ... he spent $50,000, it is said, buying up the press to praise him, and passed through the land in a sordid struggling for money."

And a clergyman at Boston preached a whole discourse of condemnation. He used as a text the three passages, "Vanity of vanities;" "Verily they have their reward;" and "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Among the assertions which followed were these: that Mr. Dickens was one of the subjects of the world of fiction; that he had "neglected the soul—the immortal part;" that "he has written and read many a line which is deadly poison;" and that "a man who would thus associate religion (*i. e.* as in the caseof Mr. Murdstone, and the schoolmaster in "Copperfield"), with the lack of all the genial affections of humanity, with repulsive and forbidding sternness, with avarice and meanness, and all this odiousness exhibited as a usual concomitant and result of religion, is a public calamity, and I have no hesitation in affirming that such morals have done more to undermine belief in the reality of a change of heart and spiritual communion with God, and to destroy reverence for the Bible, than has been done within the same period by Tom Paine's "Age of Reason."

Now the reply to these different phases of one and

the same objection is obvious. It is simply that it is not necessarily the business of a novelist to teach denominational theology; nor theology of any kind; nor even religion. It may be his business to do so, and if he does, the fact is not a sound objection to his books. At the same time, if he does so, it will be made an objection by those who dislike his particular theological views, or who dislike religious novels. For instance, the Rev. Mr. Huntington has written one or two "high-church" novels, which high-church Episcopalians are likely to be pleased with, and which New England Calvinistic Presbyterians and Congregationalists are likely to be displeased with. Yet the high-church Episcopalianism of the books is in fact neither here nor there. It is like the color of the binding, or the quality of the paper, or the size of the type; it is a reason for like or dislike by one and another individual, but not for an absolute judgment that the book is either bad or good in an artistic sense, or an ethical sense, or a religious sense. Cardinal Wiseman's little Romanist novel of "Fabiola" is another case in point. So is Henry Brooke's "Fool of Quality," though in the more general sense, as religious, not as sectarian.

For a novelist to put enough of Christianity into his book to show that he is a Christian, or to make the book a teacher of Christianity, in the sense of absolutely perfecting the purpose, is impracticable. Will a Unitarian doctrine of Christ be sufficient—a Socinian, or an Arminian view? A Sabellian one? Doctor Bushnell's view? Or must it be a Hopkinian Calvinism; or the views of the elder Edwards?

What tribunal shall decide upon the sufficiency of the infusion? And if any one of the various sects of Christians is satisfied, who shall guarantee the author against objections from the other sects?

Again: a novelist is to a great extent an artist. If novels must be imbued with perceptible Christianity, so must poems; so must painting and sculpture. The fundamental requirement is the same for all: that *pictures of life must teach Christianity.* Now the real truth is, that he whose vocation is to teach Christianity, should teach it; but he whose vocation is not, except that he is bound to live and act in exemplification of its principles, should not. There was a cobbler who thought he had a call to preach. He was allowed a hearing before a synod of clergymen, and one of them, deputed to give the poor fellow his answer, thus delivered himself: "Brother, we are of opinion that there is a diversity of gifts. Some have the gift of teaching, and some the gift of cobbling. It is the judgment of the assembly that you have the gift of cobbling, and that it is your duty to exercise it." The cobbler would have been wrong to have insisted on stitching a doctrinal text on the toe of every shoe he made; all he had to do was to make good shoes to the best of his ability. Mr. Church is not found fault with because there is no Christianity in his "Niagara" or his "Andes;" nor Delaroche for the want of it in his "Marie Antoinette;" nor J. Q. A. Ward for the want of it in his "Indian Hunter." Fra Angelico, Scheffer, Overbeck, painted religious pictures, and they were right; it was their vocation; but they

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ability, and in a manner which has satisfied wise and pious men that his work on earth has not been on the whole evil, but has been a very great good. In the paper called "A Fly-leaf from a Life," already quoted, Mr. Dickens asserted in plain terms that he had endeavored to inculcate Christian lessons; in the letter, also already quoted, and written in the last hours of his conscious life, he repeated the avowal even more explicitly, and added that he had even re-written the Life of Christ expressly for his own children; and in his will he urges his children to "practise Christianity in a broad spirit, not accepting the narrow construction of any man or any sect."

Rev. Henry White, a clergyman of the Church of England, and chaplain to the English House of Commons, in a sermon at the Savoy Chapel in London, although he professed to have found neither inculcations of doctrine, nor exemplifications of formal Christian observances in the works of Dickens, yet described him as a teacher of Christianity. He said that Mr. Dickens had done by his writings essential service to the Christian church. There was a purity and heartiness in his writings which were a natural consequence of his character, and this might be understood by the fact that one of the last letters he wrote, if, indeed, not the very last, was written with a view to remove a calumny that he had been unfaithful to Christian truth. Mr. Dickens, the reverend chaplain said, had taught Christianity with much greater effect than many priests had done.

At a week-day evening meeting in the church of Rev. H. W. Beecher, one of his deacons having

expressed his anxiety as to whether Mr. Dickens personally was a Christian, Mr. Beecher himself answered, speaking both to the personal point and to the character of his works. He said:

"I suppose that the loss we have sustained will produce more of a feeling of personal loss than any that has occurred since the death of Walter Scott.

"Dickens was the man of the household. He was a man with gentle, sympathetic, and human feeling —more so than almost any that used the pen. He took hold of what we might call the great middle class of feeling in the human mind. Whether he was a Christian man in the experimental sense, God only knew. We can speak about his personal private life. The other question is a difficult matter to decide. When a man is brought up under different circumstances and in different institutions from our own, they will be apt to apparently differ, and he will be hardly recognized from them. We are influenced by some men whom it is very difficult to appraise or classify, or say whether they were a little nearer that or this side, or whether they were truly Christian or not. I recollect that my father had great doubts at one time as to the Christian life and character of Bishop Heber, and expressed his doubts thereof; but no one in this generation would entertain these doubts for a moment.

"Mr. Dickens has accomplished more than any man in his life-work—so to speak—without any distinctive Christian bias. His labors, and the results attendant thereon, were far different from those of Bulwer and Byron. His writings do not teach pride,

and certainly have no tendencies toward license and dissipations, but the generic influences of his writings are to make man more pure and humane, and to render the household more happy and contented. In the matter of drink I would make an exception, because he did not stand upon that ground upon which God, in his providence, was bringing the people to realize the blessings of temperance. Dickens belonged to the old school, and I am glad to know that the old school was passing away. He was a true benefactor of his race. Though he did not undertake the work of a higher sphere—the spiritual element—yet he accomplished much good and obtained much success, and it was God's ordinance. Seldom was a man permitted to see the fruits of his works as he was. Some of his writings were devoted to the amelioration of human society, and it would be found that in no respect had he failed to accomplish good in this respect. In his tale of 'Nicholas Nickleby' he aimed to expose the evils of the school system then in existence, and this evil was afterward remedied—public opinion being drawn to a consideration of the subject. We should be thankful to God for the work that he has been raised up to accomplish in the lower sphere. He did well, and passed off from the stage in the full enjoyment of his faculties, as it were, gone in a moment. I would not cling to the heresy of the Episcopal prayer book. I would never pray that God would keep me from sudden death. I would like to be taken for once and for all, and that would prevent me from going to the shop for repairs. Dickens died at the

right time. He did his work well, and he was entitled to be reckoned among the best and noblest of men.

"It will be a pleasure to me to remember that he used our church for a reading hall. He said to me, 'Never build another church; you cannot get another so good as this for speaking.' His cordial invitation to visit his house as a guest if I went to England seems more valued than ever, now that he is gone. When he extended it to me I received it as a great honor. One of the most precious remembrances of my life was the kiss Louis Kossuth gave me. As the poet Landor said, 'No king could confer an honor upon him, for Louis Kossuth had embraced him,' so I felt in regard to my pleasant intimacy with Charles Dickens."

Hon. H. J. Raymond, who, unlike these two witnesses, was neither professionally a clergyman nor a "professing Christian," in his remarks at the New York Press dinner to Mr. Dickens, testified to an influence from his writings, whose description coincides pretty well with what is usually supposed to be the proper influence of Christianity upon practical life. He said:

"Everything that he has ever written—I say it without the slightest exception of a single book, a single page, or a single word that has ever proceeded from his pen—has been calculated to infuse into every human heart the feeling that every man was his brother, and that the highest duty he could do to the world, and the highest pleasure he could confer upon himself, and the greatest service he

could render to humanity, was to bring that other heart, whether high or low, as close to his own as possible. . . . . But I know that there is not a man here, and there is not a man who has known any man here, who knows anything of his writings, who has made himself familiar with their spirit or has yielded to their influence, who has not been made thereby a better, as well as a wiser, kinder, and nobler man."

St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii. 13) has said, "And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." It is not too much to demand that we accept Mr. Dickens's own avowal of faith in Christianity; and of having tried to teach it, which proves he had hope from it. And for his practice of the third and greatest of them all, which he could not properly claim—kindness and good-will and beneficence—we may trust the absolutely unanimous voice of all who have received his ready sympathy, his equally ready praise, or his unfailing and generous bounty. As one writer has observed, he had abundance of the religion of Abou Ben Adhem and the golden rule.

Mr. Dickens was not formally a member of any church communion; but his most usual place of attending divine worship was a Unitarian one.

It only remains to close this short outline with an attempt to sketch some of the qualities and characteristics of Mr. Dickens as an author.

He seems to have always been fond of reading books of the same sort that he wrote. One of the autobiographic touches in one of his prefaces de-

scribes him, when a little boy, as "full of Partridge, Strap, Tom Pipes, and Sancho Panza." He liked Gulliver and Robinson Crusoe; and one evening, as Mr. Forster has recorded in his Life of Landor, asked a question that showed a very unusual fact—that he had not only read, but had critically considered, that book. In reply to an observation by Landor about David Copperfield, says Forster, Dickens "replied by a question which, from so powerful and so gentle a master of both laughter and tears, startled us then, and may make the matter worth allusion still. 'But is it not yet more wonderful that one of the most popular books on earth has absolutely nothing in it to cause any one either to laugh or cry?' Such, he proceeded to say, was to be affirmed with confidence of De Foe's masterpiece; he instanced the death of Friday, in that marvellous novel, as one of the least tender, and in the true sense, least sentimental things ever written; and he accounted for the prodigious effect which the book has had upon an unexampled number and variety of readers, though without tears in it, or laughter, or even any mention of love, by its mere homely force and intensity of truth. Not every school-boy alone was interested by it, but every man who had ever been one." He read a good deal of English and also of French *belles-lettres* literature, and one writer has recorded the following rather oddly-worded hints about his preferences in the latter:

"Dickens had for Balzac a kind of frightened admiration. He reproached him for his excessive egotism, but he greatly preferred him to George

Sand, whose style he was, as a foreigner, almost unable to appreciate. Dickens knew, however, very much of the French *belles-lettres.* He knew by heart Gozlan's "Aristide Froissard;" the posthumous novels of Méry seemed to give him moments of the greatest joy. M. Feval has seen him at once laughing and crying over a page of Alphonse Daudet."

The greatest secret of Dickens's success—of his maintained originality, his power, fullness, freshness, perennial literary strength and life is an open secret. It is the same with that of another eminent person, very unlike Dickens in the object of his professional pursuits, but singularly like him in his mode of investigating and collecting the facts of life which are to be used in those pursuits—Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. The first and chiefest wonder about each of them is, that he can produce so much and so long without sameness or repetition. The endless variety of Mr. Dickens's personages, the endless variety of Mr. Beecher's instances and solutions in applied mental philosophy and illustration from animate and inanimate nature, are maintained by their following one and the same rule—a rule by which they could keep up their attractiveness as long as the human race exists. It is simply to gather fresh from the infinite stream of humanity around them what they interpret again to its members in their audiences. They receive endlessly, and transmit endlessly, for the variety of life is endless; they cannot cease to see and to set forth fresh new matter (under the ordinary limitations of their own humanity of course) until God ceases to create new human beings. Too

frequently it has been the case that romancers and sermonizers alike, have looked inside of themselves instead of outside, and after quickly exhausting one little human interior, have had no more to say, and have fallen into either silence, repetition, or babble.

Dickens was an intuitionist; he proceeded by seeing; and he saw, apprehended, and remembered with rare quickness and fidelity. His mind was full, and always filling, with faces, traits, names, and sayings innumerable; and he recalled each as he wanted it, without conscious effort, just as he at once remembered Mr. Hall, who came to see him about "Pickwick," having casually seen him once, two or three years before, in buying a magazine of him.

He was immensely productive and versatile. His novels alone were a noble achievement for a life; but besides them, he did good work in travels and biography; in a great number of short stories, sketches, and miscellaneous articles; in still greater number of speeches, addresses, and letters; in a vast extent of public readings, and in a sufficient range of dramatic performances and poetical composition to prove that in the former he would have been a master and in the latter positively successful.

Arithmetic cannot estimate imagination; yet it is a striking sum total, that Mr. Dickens has represented in his stories and sketches about fourteen hundred and twenty-five different personages.

The naturalness, truth, and force of his creations is shown by the fact that he has already been a chief fountain of phrases and characters and allu-

sions in English thought and speech for thirty-five years. Our current literature is spiced and tinged with his personages and his phraseology. "Wellerisms," in their day, were simply the prevailing form and vehicle of humor. In books, periodicals, newspapers, speeches—in daily home and friendly conversations—appear Pickwick, the Wellers, Mr. Stiggins, Mrs. Gamp, and Mr. Harris; Mr. Tapley and Mr. Micawber; Little Nell, Oliver Twist, the Cheeryble Brothers, Mr. Bumble, Mr. Mantalini, Fagin and Sikes and Nancy; Mr. Squeers and Smike, Pecksniff and Chadband, Mr. Swiveller and the Marchioness, Mrs. Jellyby and Borrioboola Gha, Mr. Turveydrop and Mr. Boythurn and Miss Flite; Aunt Trotwood and Mr. Dick, Little Emily and Mr. Barkis, Tom Pinch and Mr. Montague Trigg, Miss Nipper and Dot, Mr. Skenton and Cousin Deerix, Mr. Wemmick and Mr. Megg, Captain Cuttle and Mrs. Brusby and Mrs. F's Aunt—really we might almost call the roll of the whole fourteen hundred.

Public uselessness is described as How not to do It, and its machinery as the Circumlocution Office; Oliver asking for more stands for any helpless victim of organized abuse in the form of a benefaction. "A Pickwickian sense" is more familiar than its serious equivalent. Good advice, and bad too, are interpreted by the sage comment that "the bearings of this observation lays in the application in it," and whatever we seek, we are told to "when found, make a note of." Is a consent given, in politics or friendship or business as well as in love? —"Barkis is willin'." Is life and its experiences heavy

on any soul?—"My life is one dem'd horrid grind," says the discouraged one, and "its all a muddle." Either despair or a shower furnishes forth "a dem'd, damp, moist, unpleasant body." Whatever you prefer, from pineapple rum to the presidency is "your partickler wanity." Any incredulity about anybody occasions you to say that you "don't believe there's no sich a person." Do you rebel against anything?—Your declaration of independence is, "Don't try no impogician on the Nuss, for she will not abear it." Do you intimate acquiescence?—"My constant mortar is, I'm easy pleased." Do you want to be let to have your own way and choice?—"Put the bottle on the chimley-piece, and let me put my lips to it when I am so dispoged." Are you indifferent, or are you hurt either?—"Oh, it's of no consequence!" Would you remind some delinquent?—you intimate a knowledge of "his tricks and his manners." Would you call somebody to order?—"Let us have no meandering!" Do you want to be thought better of than another?—"Codlin's the friend, not Shorts." Would some fair lady assert her faithfulness?—She "never, never will desert Mr. Micawber." Is a lesson of worldly prudence to be taught?—The incomparable balance between happiness and misery is recited, defined by means of a single sixpence by that great authority in the ethics of finance. And perhaps one of the most frequently applicable of all, the most mordant of all, was the fearful unconventional pronunciamento of the imbecile old lady—though she might have looked

a good while for a saying more likely to be deserved by somebody or other—"I Hate a Fool!"

Among all the striking contrasts between Dickens and Thackeray, none is more so than their case as to quotations; none shows more strongly how true was the unison of the genial voice and heart of Dickens with those of his race; and how disjoined and solitary was Thackeray. While Dickens has enriched the English language with a whole literature of phrases and quotations, Thackeray has not furnished one. A prose cento out of Dickens could easily be made to supply the whole conversation of a family or a company, and a pretty intelligent and witty one too. But we never repeat a phrase nor a word of Thackeray.

Dickens is objective, and not subjective; his work was to deal with things without him, not to analyze his own consciousness. Closely connected with this objective quality is the perfect unconsciousness with which his stories are told. Like a mirror, he receives the image of an object and reflects it again without any union of himself with it. You can read novel after novel by Dickens without thinking about him at all, until you remember to admire the man whose work you have been enjoying. The characters move and speak; the author is out of sight. In Thackeray's books there is scarcely a page where the author is not forced on the reader's attention. He hardly pretends to stand back from among his puppets, and he can hardly let one of them speak a word, or do a thing, without croaking a moral chorus; it was not without reason that he called his own books "dismal preachments." When

Mr. Dickens began to write, it was from a pure and unmingled instinct to describe the human nature that he saw. This was always the main thread and motive and vehicle in his books, whatever else there was. In the "Sketches" and in "Pickwick" there is no attempt to do anything else. Purposeful reformatory campaigning began with "Oliver Twist," and thenceforward many of his novels were reformatory works. All of them, whether with this secondary character or not, were novels of human character. Whatever of plot, adventure, or history there was, was of no higher grade of importance than a third one, subordinate both to the invariable *plenum* of character-painting, and to the occasional superadded object of reforming something.

The objects aimed at in the militant part of Mr. Dickens's labors may be described collectively as abuses. He did not, like Thackeray, assault any social order as such. Reading Thackeray leaves the impression that the English nobility are characteristically fools and villains. Reading Dickens may give an impression that the nobility are no more fit to govern than other people; but not that they are in any way particularly worse than other people. But there are things against which Dickens inspires his reader with a profound disgust and hatred. They are always social phenomena wrongfully permitted by a careless public, and injuring the helpless or the ignorant. In no single case of the least importance will that description fail. It applies to the Circumlocution Office, to the Court of Chancery, to the Debtors' Prison, to the Union Workhouse, to all

manner of spurious philanthropists and hypocritical pretenders to goodness, to the Yorkshire cheap schools, to brutal hospital nurses, to organized or individual business swindlers, to vulgar abusive newspapers, to negro slavery, to duels, to rascally American land speculators, to the stone-hearted capitalist who grinds the life out of his mill-hands, to the impudent ugliness of railroad officials.

In nothing whatever does Mr. Dickens show such immense, intense, vivid force, as in these attacks upon strong abuses, for the behalf of those who cannot defend themselves. And if the deep wrath and scorn and powerful will were not sufficiently evidenced of themselves in the printed words, they are so by the simple fact that abuses attacked by Mr. Dickens have been destroyed by him. Not all of them; but enough to give him an actual and enviable pre-eminence over all the other novelists in the world. The Yorkshire schools he killed as it were with one sweep of a scythe; the law reforms set on foot by Brougham and Lyndhurst are, it has been stated, distinctly traceable to his writings. Mrs. Gamp and Mrs. Prigg have followed Mrs. Harris into non-existence; debtors no longer starve in prison. And besides these particular instances, a great share of the public attention which has during Mr. Dickens's career been steadily more and more concentrated upon all the classes of institutions which he exposed, must be credited to his constant and powerful influence upon public opinion.

While Mr. Dickens was totally unaffected, and without conceit, he was pleasantly conscious of his

powers—a state of mind very often and very wrongfully confounded with conceit or pride. If he expressed any particular pride, it was much more likely to be about his ability to work long and hard, than about his power to create works of imagination. And he could unaffectedly enjoy any enjoyable incident arising out of his reputation or writings. He used to like to tell how, travelling in Italy, he visited a certain monastery, and was conducted over the building by a young monk who, though a native of the country, spoke remarkably fluent English. There was, however, one peculiarity about his pronunciation. He frequently misplaced his v's and w's. "Have you been in England?" asked Mr. Dickens. "No," replied the monk, "I have learnt my English from this book," producing "Pickwick," and it further appeared that he had selected Mr. Samuel Weller as the *beau ideal* of elegant pronunciation.

And an admirer tells the following little story of his jolly recognition of one of the best pieces of his own fun:

"I had to leave Ventnor for London, and taking the four-horse coach for Ryde, which is opposite to Portsmouth, and about fourteen miles distant from Ventnor, I unexpectedly found myself a fellow-traveller with Dickens. Seated beside him, I spent a pleasant hour listening to the exuberance of his imagination, until we arrived at the village of Lake. It was pouring with rain, and we were outside passengers. A lady of the name of Harris had booked her passage in the coach. It stopped at the house where Mrs. Harris was supposed to reside. The

guard got down and gave a tremendous rap at the door. The servant came, in her pattens, and inquired what he wanted. 'Mrs. Harris,' shouted the guard; 'and the coach can't stop,' he continued. The servant girl was amazed. 'There is no Mrs. Harris lives here,' she said. 'Yes, there is,' he replied, 'and if she is not quick the coach will go without her.' But there was no Mrs. Harris to be found in the village of Lake. I turned round to Dickens and said: 'I never did believe that there ever was a Mrs. Harris, did you?' And Dickens roared with laughter. The incident put him in the best of spirits, and the genial joyousness that he exhibited is pleasant to remember."

There is a pleasant and touching friendliness and confidence in this passage of his speech at Boston, on his first visit to this country, though of a soberer color:

"There is one other point connected with the labors (if I may call them so) that you hold in such generous esteem, to which I cannot help adverting. I cannot help expressing the delight, the more than happiness, it was to me to find so strong an interest awakened on this side of the water in favor of that little heroine of mine, to whom your President has made allusion, who died in her youth. I had letters about that child in England, from the dwellers in log-huts among the morasses, and swamps, and densest forests, and deep solitudes of the far West. Many a sturdy hand, hard with the axe and spade, and browned by the summer's sun, has taken up the pen and written to me a little history of domestic joy or sorrow, always coupled, I am proud to say,

with something of interest in that little tale, or some comfort or happiness derived from it; and the writer has always addressed me, not as a writer of books for sale, resident some four or five thousand miles away, but as a friend to whom he might freely impart the joys and sorrows of his own fireside. Many a mother—I could reckon them now by dozens, not by units—has done the like; and has told me how she lost such a child at such a time, and where she lay buried, and how good she was, and how, in this or that respect, she resembled Nell. I do assure you that no circumstance of my life has given me one hundredth part of the gratification I have derived from this source. I was wavering at the time whether or not to wind up my clock and come and see this country; and this decided me. I feel as if it were a positive duty, as if I were bound to pack up my clothes and come and see my friends, and even now I have such an odd sensation in connection with these things that you have no chance of spoiling me. I feel as though we were agreeing—so indeed we are, if we substitute for fictitious characters the classes from which they are drawn—about third parties, in whom we had a common interest. At every new act of kindness on your part, I say it to myself: That's for Oliver—I should not wonder if that was meant for Smike—I have no doubt that it was intended for Nell; and so became much happier, certainly, but a more sober and retiring man than ever I was before."

It follows from the nature of the method which Mr. Dickens instinctively pursued, that he was

original. The shallow charges that he imitated Irving and others, have been referred to, rather as matter of history or curiosity, than as needing any refutation. Some of Mr. Dickens's admirers or commentators have however described him as a disciple of, or as influenced by, Mr. Thomas Carlyle. This is a great error. No doubt Mr. Dickens admired Mr. Carlyle, for he said so; but neither his tone of mind, his choice of subject-matter, the lessons he taught, nor the language in which he taught them, have any color of imitation or following of Mr. Carlyle. If he used them at all in literature, it was not as a shining example, but as an awful warning. How could it be otherwise? Dickens thinks well of humanity, and Carlyle ill; one loves men and women, the other despises them; one is happy, and rays out happiness; the other is miserable, and rays out misery and gloom. Indeed, even if it were to be admitted that Carlyle was a leader, a giant, a whole generation ago, he is greatly changed. Like Lancelot at the tomb of Guenevere, he must have shrunk more than a cubit from mere grief. Now, and for years past, he has been far more like a dwarf than a giant. He is distorted, morose, and malign; strong, no doubt, and not without an occasional capricious gleam of kind feeling; but it is the kindness of the unhappy Black Dwarf of Mucklestane Moor, fitful and untrustworthy, and liable at any instant to turn into insane howls and wild threats and hateful execrations upon all his race.

There are some interesting accounts of Mr. Dickens's habits in gathering his materials. The persons who

sat to him for many of his characters are known, and no one who has ever made likenesses with pen or pencil can help knowing that Mr. Dickens's method was to have seen, and if possible studied, the individual whom he drew. Thus, it is said, Mrs. Bardell was drawn from a living portrait; she was a Mrs. Ann Ellis, who kept an eating-house near Doctors' Commons. Mr. Snodgrass, in his principal characteristics, and even the description of his personal appearance, was at once accepted as a caricature of a Mr. Winters, a *nouveau riche*, who might be seen in the season, every afternoon at three o'clock, ogling the ladies in the Ladies' Mile in the Park, and in the summer at Cheltenham, Bath, and the fashionable watering places. The "Fat Boy" was acknowledged to be sketched from the servant of a gate-keeper in Essex, on the London and Chelmsford road. The Cheeryble Brothers were Messrs. William and Daniel Grant of Manchester; Sir John Chester was meant for Lord Chesterfield; Mr. Boythorn was Landor; Mr. Skimpole, Leigh Hunt (though it has been denied that anything more than a mere external resemblance was meant); Mr. Pecksniff (it is said) Mr. S. C. Hall; David Copperfield himself (not in any complete sense however); Wilkins Micawber, his own father, whose obligations the novelist himself paid up; and so on.

In like manner he watched sharply for names suitable for his purpose; when he saw a strange or odd name on a shop-board, or in walking through a village or country town, he entered it in his pocket-

book and added it to his reserve list. Then, runs the story, when he wanted a striking surname for a new character, he had but to take the first half of one real name, and to add to it the second half of another, to produce the exact effect upon the eye and ear of the reader he desired.

Of his discovery of the name of the immortal "Pickwick," the following sprightly account is given:

"Many works had just been issued with either the name of the author appearing on the title-page under the guise of editor, or, when they were from the pens of unknown writers, under the editorial sponsorship of well-known authors, and it was decided that the new book should follow in the wake, and it consequently appeared as 'edited by Boz.' The title was written out by Mr. Chapman, and was scarcely altered except in the leading word, that of 'Nimrod' having, as Mr. Dickens asserts, been first proposed. A better name was soon found. Mr. Dickens rushed into the publishers' office one day, exclaiming, with evident delight, 'I've got it, Moses Pickwick, Bath-coachman.' He had just seen painted on the door of a stage-coach that was passing along the street the name and address 'Moses Pickwick & Co., Bath,' that worthy firm being the proprietors of a line of stages running from the great metropolis to the well-known seat of fashion in the West of England. Ten or fifteen years later the present writer witnessed the same inscription painted on coach doors in the ancient city of Bath, to the neighborhood of which Mr. Pickwick's enterprise had been then confined by the encroachments of the

steam-horse. And so with the first name, Moses, changed to Samuel, originated the cognomen of a character whose fame is co-extensive with the English language."

The name is the more fortunate, since the picking, poking office of the old-fashioned little candle-correcting instrument called a "pickwick" possessed a close analogy with the particular sort of scientific inquisitiveness required in developing the "Theory of Tittlebats," and in similar researches.

Any one who will search a little for himself will find abundant evidence of the reality of this apparently fantastic nomenclature. Guppy was not long ago a passenger on a Liverpool steamer. Ginery Dunkle is not as strange a name as Ginery Twitchell's, who was not long ago a member of a high legislative body in these United States, and who is a "railroad man" of considerable fame. Nor is it very long since Miss Rose Budd was married in New England, to a clergyman and gentleman of culture and eminence, though her namesake Rosa Bud will never marry either Edwin Drood or Neville Landless.

It is worth recording that Mr. Dickens wrote just about one novel in two years. In his prefaces he repeatedly names that or nearly that period as having been used on some one book. His fourteen principal novels, beginning with "Pickwick" and ending with "Our Mutual Friend," appeared during just twenty-eight years, from 1836–7 to 1864–5. This order of production reminds one of the law, well known to physiologists and genealogists, that a mother should bear children not oftener than once

in two years. Many a genealogy will show list after list of eight or ten or even more children of the same fruitful old Puritan matron, dating regularly every odd or even year. And by a further coincidence, it was after having produced his first five novels in five years that Mr. Dickens found himself overworked, and took a vacation.

If space and time permitted, it would be interesting and profitable to trace the contrasts and similarities between Dickens and his great predecessors, Scott and Irving; his other predecessors, Theodore Hook and Bulwer; his great contemporaries, Thackeray and Hood; his other contemporaries, Collins, Brontë, Elizabeth Sheppard, Mrs. Lewes, and others; his imitator (in the reform line), Charles Reade. Other instructive lessons would follow from comparing him, not with authors, but with such artists as Hogarth and Cruikshank; with dramatists, and with poets. But all this must be omitted.

A few negatives of Mr. Dickens's works should be noticed. There is (so to speak) no learned element in them; no antiquarianism, no labored history no reference, nor allusions nor mottoes nor quotations nor citations by chapter and verse, nor notes nor glossaries. There is no attempt at serious eloquence, unless the passages of impassioned description are to be called such; no *bon mots* nor puns nor jokes, such as constitute the anecdotes of Tallyrand and Jerrold; no systematized mental or moral philosophy; no intentional analysis of character; no use of animal magnetism, spiritism, or any of their cognate phenomena; no dialects whatever, unless the

Americanisms, the broken English of a few foreigners, and the Cockney speech of London be counted exceptions; not a single Scotch person; one Welsh woman (Mrs. Woodcourt), and not one Irish person, except a servant-girl, and one character in one of the Sketches; neither, however, marked by dialect.

To deliver a critical estimate of the good qualities which Dickens had, would be a responsible, difficult, and notably thankless task. Very few indeed are those who do not find in his books something to enjoy; and each values most in him what he individually relishes most. Some love his pathos, some his humor, some his humanitarian labors. The pathetic children, Little Nell, Tiny Tim, and Paul Dombey, have perhaps been most popular of all his characters, the first most; though some believe that the second was the author's own favorite. For another class of minds, his humorous characters are beyond comparison the most enjoyable; such as the Wellers, and Mrs. Gamp, and Micawber. The personages with whom he was least successful were what may be called his goodies; and perhaps his heroes and heroines must be ranked among these. This is however an almost universal condition of novel writing. In the heart and centre of the whirl and maze of the characters, it seems as if there were of necessity in every novel, as in the middle of a typhoon, a motionless, empty pivot-space, in itself insignificant and vapid, but in some way indispensable for the mechanism of the actually moving parts. It may be added that very many of his Americanisms in the "Notes," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and "Mugby

Junction," are not such as can be discovered in actual life. Among his books, his own preference was "David Copperfield;" Mr. Thackeray's little girl preferred "Nicholas Nickleby;" many choose "Oliver Twist," very many "Pickwick," and there is at least one person who likes best the "Tale of Two Cities."

There have been a few positive dislikers and disapprovers of Dickens. These might perhaps be classed as philosophers and Stigginses. A specimen of the latter variety has been referred to. The former, it will be found, disapprove or despise novels, as such, on principle; and if they dislike novels there is nothing to be said against them. It is no fault of theirs. Some very worthy and useful people have disliked roses, and strawberries, and music. There is no danger that the world will be overrun with such mental deformities, any more than that the human race will become hunchbacked. Mr. Emerson may perhaps be taken as an instance of these wise men; for though he does not avow that he despises all novels, the reasons he gives for despising some will be found to force him to despise all—or would be if Mr. Emerson made use of principle. In describing what he apprehends to be the too practical, unphilosophic, narrow, and ungeneralizing habits of the English mind, Mr. Emerson attributes the same traits to their *belles-lettres* literature, as well as to the rest of their mental products, and to Dickens by name among the rest. He says:

"The essays, the fiction, and the poetry of the day have the like municipal limits. Dickens, with preternatural apprehension of the language of manners,

and the varieties of street life, with pathos and laughter, with patriotic and still enlarging generosity, writes *London tracts.* He is a painter of English details, like Hogarth; local and temporary in his tints and style, and local in his aims."

With this utter failure to even see what the problem of this novelist is, what his capacities are to solve it, or what he has actually done toward a solution, it is natural enough that Mr. Emerson should dispose of the whole brotherhood of present English romance writers with one sweeping sentence, giving two other specimens to show how worthless a company they are.

"Bulwer, an industrious writer, with occasional ability, is distinguished for his reverence of intellect as a temporality, and appeals to the worldly ambition of the student. His romances tend to fan these low flames. Their [the English] novelists despair of the heart. Thackeray finds that God has made no allowance for the poor thing in his universe; more's the pity, he thinks;—but 'tis not for us to be wiser: we must renounce ideals, and accept London."

But Mr. Emerson's mission is to advocate what he supposes to be the truest utilitarianism, in a manner which shall give him the benefit of the freest imaginativeness. Given over to the exemplification of one vast paradox, it is no wonder that he has so totally failed to understand the successful union in Mr. Dickens of the qualities which in himself mingle only, like the clay and iron in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image, to make his mental structure unstable.

A single observation upon Mr. Dickens's method will be more suggestive and useful than any assumption of an exhaustive analysis of and judgment upon him. It is this: that his method was always dramatic—theatrical. His love for the drama and his own remarkable dramatic gifts, have been sufficiently described; but the extent to which he systematically used a theatrical method in developing his characters and their action might easily escape notice. It was not occasionally, but naturally and unconsciously and always, that he produced his impressions in the theatrical manner (the word is used as a definition, not as an imputation); that is, by exaggerating gesture, voice, or trait of character to such an extent that no individual of a great audience could fail to see and hear. His bad people are worse, his good people better, his silly people sillier, his children more gigantically childlike (putting adult thoughts in a childlike manner), his funny people funnier, than those who can be seen. It is not meant by this that probability or keeping is surrendered, for it is not; all that is meant is, that such a modification of proportions is made as a painter uses who changes the proportions of light and shade to increase the effect of a picture; or an actor who, in expressing anger or fear, moves his features more, and articulates more painstakingly, and speaks with a greater volume of tone, so that the furthest spectator may hear and see.

Mr. Dickens is to be estimated among that small class of rare and great geniuses who have produced what was of high intrinsic excellence, who have pro-

duced much, and whose labors have been greatly acceptable, because in harmony with the spirit of their age. He gave very great pleasure, and he did great good. He has not written a wicked word, and he has written many volumes of good ones. He has never encouraged nor justified nor beautified revenge nor falsehood, impurity nor crime, nor sin. He has invariably and powerfully presented them as evils and unhappinesses, and has shown virtue to be its own reward, and to be likely, moreover, to win all other desirable rewards. He was by vocation a great realist delineator of the human nature around him—sympathetic, kindly, loving good, hating and fighting evil; equally a master of the pathetic and the humorous, the terrible, the grotesque, and the kindly. He was a great Force—self-made, laborious, energetic, and of immense executive ability; a great Truth—seeing, understanding, and interpreting; a great Good—giving pleasure and not pain, powerfully helping the Right and combating the Wrong. He was the greatest English humorist, the second greatest English novelist (for Scott must be given the first place), and, beyond all comparison, the greatest novelist-reformer of any age.

CHAPTER V.

DICKENS: BY HENRI TAINE.

[Chap. I. of the 5th and concluding volume of Taine's *History of English Literature.*]

I.—THE WRITER.

1. Relation to each other of the different elements of an author's talent. Importance of the faculty of imagination.

2. Clearness and intensity of the imagination in Dickens. His fancy audacious and vehement. Inanimate objects, with him, become personified, and take on passions. How his conceptions approach to intuitions. How they approach monomania. His representations of persons under delusions, and of the insane.

3. The favorite objects of his enthusiasm. His trivialities and minutiæ. How he resembles the English painters. Difference between him and George Sand. Ruth Pinch and Geneviève. His stage-coach ride.

4. The strong emotions produced by his species of imagination. His pathetic representations. The operative, Stephen Blackpool. His comic side. He runs into buffoonery and caricature. The extravagance and exaggerated excitement of his gayety.

II.—THE PUBLIC.

1. The English novelist is required to be moral. How this condition modifies ideas of love. Love with George Sand, and with Dickens. The young girl and the wife.

2. How this condition modifies the idea of passion. Passion in Balzac and in Dickens.

3. Inconveniences of this necessity. Comic or odious masks substituted for natural personages. Pecksniff and Tartufe. Why, with Dickens, his story as a whole is deficient in action.

III.—PERSONAGES.

1. Two classes of personages. Natural, instinctive characters. Artificial and "practical" characters. Dickens prefers the former. His aversion for the latter.

2. Hypocrites. Pecksniff. His English peculiarities. Compared with Tartufe. The "practical" man, Gradgrind. The proud man, Dombey. The English peculiarities of these characters.

3. Children. French literature without them. The Joash of Racine, and David Copperfield. The common people.

4. Dickens's ideal man. Correspondence of this ideal with a public want. Opposition in England between education and nature. Advocacy of sensibility and instinct, as against the oppressions of conventionality and rules. Success of Dickens.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

If Dickens were dead, his biography could be written. The day after an eminent man is buried, his friends and enemies go straight to work; his old school-fellows send accounts to the newspapers of his boyish escapades. Another recalls, word for word, the conversations he has held with the dead for twenty-five years. His executor publishes a list of his diplomas and dignities, with dates and details, and gives the history of his investments and his fortune. His grand-nephews and second cousins describe his kind deeds, and make a catalogue of his domestic virtues. If there is no relative who possesses the requisite literary ability, some Oxford graduate is employed—a conscientious and learned man—who proceeds to deal with the deceased as if he were a Greek classic. He accumulates an infinity of documents, piles an infinity of comments on these, rounding off the whole with an infinity of dissertations, and some Christmas day, ten years afterward, he comes with a white cravat and a calm smile to present to the assembled family a biography, in three volumes quarto, of eight hundred pages each, whose lighter portions would put asleep a Berlin German. They welcome him with tears of joy; he is put in the place of honor, and his work is sent to the *Edinburgh Review*. The editor, terrified at the enormous parcel, hands it over to some intrepid young reviewer, who makes out some sort of biographical sketch, by the help of the table of contents. Such posthumous biographies have this particular advantage: that the deceased is not in a position to contradict either reviewer or biographer.

Dickens, unfortunately, is still living* to contradict his biographers. Worse still, he means to be his own biographer. One of his translators having on one occasion applied to him for certain documents, he answered that he should keep them to be used by himself. No doubt "David Copperfield," the best of his romances, has the air of a confidential disclosure; but where does this stop? What defines the limit between fiction and truth? All that we know—or rather, all that we can say—is, that Dickens was born in 1812; was the son of a short-hand reporter; became a short-hand reporter himself; was hard pressed by poverty in his youth; and that his romances, which he had issued serially, have gained him a large fortune and an immense reputation. Anybody may conjecture for himself whatever else he likes. Mr. Dickens will give his own version of his own story some day, whenever he shall write his own memoirs. Until that time his doors are shut, and over-inquisitive searchers are left to knock in vain. He has of course a perfect right to this line of conduct. The fact that he is celebrated does not make him the property of the public. There is no obligation to impart his confidence. He belongs to himself, and is perfectly at liberty to keep to himself whatever he chooses. Because he puts his books into the hands of his readers, it does not follow that he must do the same with his own life. Let us content ourselves with what he has given us. Forty volumes are enough, and more than enough, to acquaint us with the author. They will certainly give us all that we have any business to know about him. It is not the accidental occurrences of his life which belong to history—it is his genius, and this is in his works. A man's genius is like a watch; it is an assemblage of parts, one of which is the main-spring. We can begin with this, and show how it causes the movements of the whole train, following from one wheel to another, until we come to the hands at the end. This inner history of the mind has no necessary connection with the external history of the mind, though it is of much greater value.

*The second edition of M. Taine's volume is dated 1862.

I. THE WRITER.

The first question to be asked about an artist is, of what quality is his power of vision? How distinct, how keen, how powerful are his imaginations? The answer to this inquiry will define his method in advance; for he is using his imagination in every line he writes, and he will maintain to the end the same manner which he has at the beginning. The answer will describe his talent too; for in a novelist, the imagination is the controlling faculty. His artistic skill as a writer, his taste, his perception of truth, all depend on this. A single additional degree of imaginative vehemence will disorganize his style, change his character, and confound his plans. If we study the imagination of Dickens, we shall find in it the source of both his defects and his merits, of his powers and his excesses.

1.

Dickens contains a painter—and an English painter. Nobody, I believe, ever represented with more exact detail and greater force all the forms and colors of a picture. Read his description of a storm: you see, as it were, impressions daguerreotyped by the blinding flash of its lightning.* An

* "The eye, partaking of the quickness of the flashing light, saw in its every gleam a multitude of objects which it could not see at steady noon in fifty times that period. Bells in steeples, with the rope and wheel that moved them; ragged nests of birds in cornices and nooks," etc.—*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

imagination so lucid and so forceful might be expected to vivify inanimate objects with perfect ease. It arouses extraordinary emotion within the mind where it is at work; and the author pours out upon the things he describes something of the overflowing passion that burdens him. He gives a voice to stones; blank walls stretch out into vast phantoms; black pits yawn hideously and mysteriously in the darkness; legions of strange beings whirl and quiver over all the fancy-haunted fields; all nature is filled with living things; all matter takes on a living quality. Yet these images are all distinct; in these fantasies nothing is vague or disorderly; imaginary objects are represented with outlines as precise, with details as full, as real ones; the visions are equivalent to realities.

There is in particular one description of a wild, powerful night-wind which recalls some passages of "Notre Dame de Paris." This, like all Dickens's descriptions, comes wholly from the imagination. He never describes, as Walter Scott does, in order to supply his reader with a map,—to furnish a topographical locality for his story. Nor does he ever describe, as Byron does, from a love of the magnificence of nature; to display a splendid series of grand pictures. His object is neither exactitude nor beauty. He is simply struck with some unexpected sight, is excited by it, and bursts out in a spontaneous description. Now it is fallen leaves chased by the wind, flying before it, tumbling over each other, tossed, scared, losing their way, hiding in furrows, drowning themselves in ditches, perching

in trees.* Now it is the night-wind sweeping round and round a church, groaning, and trying with its invisible hand windows and doors,—insinuating itself into every crevice, and when it has got itself enclosed in the stony prison, wailing and howling to get out again.† For a while, all this is only the sombre imagination of the truth. But a little further, and we perceive the passionate religious sentiment of a revolutionary Protestant; when he speaks of its seeming "to chant, in its wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped." But the artist quickly returns upon us; he takes us up into the steeple, and envelopes us in a jingle of words that give us the sensation of being carried up in a whirlwind. The wind whistles and flings about the arches and loopholes and grim old turrets; it twists and twines about the giddy stair, and twirls the groaning weathercock. He has seen every part and item of the old steeple; his mind is like a mirror; neither the minutest nor the ugliest detail escapes it. He has taken account of every old rust-eaten iron rail, every shrivelled sheet of lead that crackles and heaves beneath the unaccustomed tread, the shabby nests stuffed into corners of mouldy beams, the accumulations of gray dust, the speckled spiders, indolent and fat with long security, that swing idly to and fro in the vibration of the

* "It was small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves," etc. —*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

† "For the night-wind has a dismal trick of wandering round and round a building of that sort and moaning as it goes," etc —*The Chimes.*

bells. Such descriptions subject us to their illusion. Suspended there on high between the flying clouds whose shadows are sweeping over the town below, and the feeble light, hardly visible through the gloom, we feel a sort of dizziness, and easily imagine, as Dickens did, an intelligence and a living soul in the metallic voices of the bells that inhabit the vibrating fastness.

Upon these bells he has founded a romance; and he has made others in a like manner. For Dickens is a poet. He is as much at home in the imaginary world as in the real. Now the Chimes commune with the poor old ticket-porter at the corner, and console him. Again, it is the Cricket on the Hearth that sings of domestic joys, and recalls to the mind of the desolate master of the house the happy evenings, the confidential intercourses, the comfort, the quiet gayety that he has enjoyed there, but possesses no more. Again, the story is of a sickly and precocious child who feels that he is dying, and as he slumbers in his sister's arms, hears the distant song of the murmuring waves that lull him. With Dickens, inanimate things take the color of the thoughts of his personages. His imagination is so vivid and eager that it carries everything along with it as it goes. If one of his personages is happy, the clouds and the flowers are happy too, if miserable, all nature must sorrow with him. Everything has a voice, even down to the houses of vulgar streets. The current of the writer's thoughts passes through a swarm of visions; and sometimes carries him into the strangest fantasies. Thus, a pretty,

simple-hearted young girl is crossing Fountain Court and the Temple, on her way to meet her brother. Could anything be more simple?—more vulgar, if you please? But Dickens bestows abundant emotion on the occasion. To do her honor, he calls in birds, trees, the fountain, the lawyers' offices, their files of papers, and abundance of other things. It is foolish—but it is almost an enchantment.* The passage is forced, is it not? Our French taste, habituated to moderation, is revolted by these accesses of affectation and unnatural conceits. Yet the affectation is entirely natural; Dickens does not go aside to seek such things; he finds them in his way. His imagination, active to excess, is like the string of an instrument drawn too tight; it produces, without any violent touch, sounds not heard under other conditions.

Here is a specimen of the way in which this excitability is stimulated. Take, for instance, a shop; no matter what,—the most repulsive you think of; that of a dealer in nautical instruments. Dickens looks upon the barometers, chronometers, compasses, telescopes, glasses, maps, speaking-trumpets, and so forth. He sees them all; so many of them, so distinctly; they seem to gather to each other and crowd each other, that they fill and confuse his brain, as it were; so many geographical and nautical ideas are displayed in the windows, suspended from the ceiling, hung upon the wall; they are discharged,

* "Whether there was life enough left in the slow vegetation of Fountain Court for the smoky shrubs to have any consciousness of the brightest and purest-hearted little woman in the world," etc. —*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

as it were, upon him from so many directions at once, and in such quantities, that he forgets where he is; the shop is transfigured; and "partaking of the general infection, seemed almost to become a snug, sea-going, ship-shape concern, wanting only good sea-room, in the event of an unexpected launch, to work its way securely to any desert island in the world."

The distance between a lunatic and a man of genius is not great. Napoleon, a competent authority, asserted this to Esquirol.* The faculty which insures us glory is that which carries us into the madman's cell. The creative imagination both forms the phantoms of the lunatic and the personages of the artist; and the same classification may be applied to both manifestations of it. The imagination of Dickens resembles that of a monomaniac. Its characteristics are, to give itself wholly up to one single idea, to be possessed by it, to see nothing else, to repeat it in a hundred different forms, to exaggerate it, to impress it when thus exaggerated upon the mind of the spectator, to dazzle him and overpower him with it, to impress it upon him so deeply and permanently that he cannot escape from the recollection of it—such are the leading peculiarities of such an imagination, of such a style. In this kind "David Copperfield" is a masterpiece. Never were objects more plainly present before the eye and more firmly fixed in the recollection of the reader, than

* "Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."
M. Taine seems not to have known Dryden's lines.—(Tr.)

those which it describes. The old house, the parlor the kitchen, Mr. Peggotty's boat, and, above all, the courtyard of the school, are interiors unequalled for strength of relief, force, and precision. Dickens possesses both the passion and the patience of the painters of his country. He reckons all the details one by one, observes the different colors of the old tree-trunks, perceives every old cask, every green or broken flagstone, every crevice in the damp walls. He notices even the strange smells of the place—just how large are the moss-grown spots. He reads the names of pupils written on the door, and is particular as to the forms of the letters in them. And yet, for all this minuteness, there is no coldness. The quantity of detail is because the observation was intense; the exactitude proves the passion. This passionateness is felt without being realized; all at once, on reaching the end of a page, it is detected. The temerities of the style betray it; the violences in phraseology correspond to the vehemence of the impression. Exaggerated metaphors are used to suggest grotesque fancies to the mind. There is a sense of being beset with extravagant visions. Mr. Mell plays on his flute until Copperfield fancied that the whole of him went into the large hole where he blew, and passed out through the keys below. Tom Pinch is undeceived, and discovers that his employer, Pecksniff, is a hypocritical scoundrel. "He had so long been used to steep the Pecksniff of his fancy in his tea, and spread him out upon his toast, and take him as a relish with his beer, that he made but a poor breakfast on the first

morning after his expulsion." We are reminded of the fantasies of Hoffmann; we fear lest we shall absolutely fall into some delusion ourselves. Such eccentricities are the mark of illness rather than of health.

Dickens is equally admirable in painting hallucinations. It is obvious that he partakes of those which he ascribes to his personages; that he is possessed by their ideas and enters into their notions. As an Englishman and a moralist, he has more than once described remorse. Perhaps he might justly be found fault with for making it such a scarecrow as he does; perhaps an artist ought not to thus become merely an assistant to the policeman and the preacher. Yet the portrait of Jonas Chuzzlewit is so terrible, that we can pardon it for being made useful. Jonas has secretly gone out from his room, has murdered his enemy, and believes that henceforward he shall sleep in peace. But the remembrance of his crime, like a slow poison, insensibly disorganizes his mind. He can no longer govern his thoughts, but is hurried away by them as by the fury of a frightened horse. He is thinking incessantly, and in terror, of the chamber at home where he is supposed to be asleep. He looks round the room, he counts the patterns of the paper, sees the long folds of the dark curtains, the impression which he left where he lay on the bed, the door, where there may be a knock at any moment. The more he tries to escape from his thoughts, the more they possess him; they become as it were a burning gulf where he rolls and struggles with cries and sweats

of agony. He fancies himself lain down in the bed at home, where he is supposed to be; and in an instant he sees himself there. He is frightened at this other self; and the imagination is so distinct that he is not sure he is not really there, in London. Thus "he became in a manner his own ghost and phantom." And this imaginary other self becomes a mirror that holds up to his conscience the picture of the murder and its punishment. Then he returns home, and in a fright creeps to the door of the chamber. Man of business as he is, calculator, mere mechanical machine for dealing with practical affairs, he has grown as fanciful as a nervous woman. He steps along on tiptoe, as if afraid of awakening that imaginary man in the bed. At the moment when he turns the key in the door a monstrous terror seizes him;—suppose that the murdered man should be standing inside there? At last he goes in and lies down in the bed, parched with fever. He draws the bedclothes over his eyes, to shut out the accursed room, and he sees it more distinctly than ever. The rustling of the coverings, the buzzing of an insect, the beatings of his own heart, all cry out to him, "Murderer!" Gazing with a frenzy of intense attention upon the door, he at last believes that some one is opening it, and hears it creak. His senses are astray; he neither dares to trust them nor to distrust them; and in this nightmare of hideous shapes that confound his reason, he feels nothing to be real except the ceaseless torment of his convulsive despair. Then all other thoughts, all other dangers, all the world, are covered and hidden in

one single question—When will they find that corpse in the wood? He seeks to escape from the thought, but it abides and clings, as if bound to him by iron chains. He seems all the time to be passing through that wood, gliding on with noiseless and furtive steps, putting the boughs aside; that he draws nearer, nearer; that he is "startling the very flies that were thickly sprinkled over it like heaps of dried currants." He is ever imagining the discovery; he is watching to hear of it, listening for the cry and rumor in the street, hearing everybody who goes out or comes in, who goes up or down; and yet, at the same time, he is always seeing the lonely corpse in the woods, pointing it out, as it were, to people whom he meets, as if to say, "'Look here! Do you know of this? Is it found? Do you suspect me?' If he had been condemned to bear the body in his arms, and lay it down for recognition at the feet of every one he met, it could not have been more constantly with him, or a cause of more monotonous and dismal occupation than it was in this state of his mind."

Jonas is here on the verge of madness. Others of Dickens's personages are actually insane. He has drawn three or four portraits of insane persons, which are very amusing at first sight, but which are so true that as we reflect upon them they become horrible. To portray these disordered minds requires an imagination like that of Dickens, lawless, excessive, itself capable of illusions. Two of these pictures especially are at once laughable and terrible: Augustus, the melancholy youth

who is on the point of marrying Miss Pecksniff, and the poor Mr. Dick, half idiot and half monomaniac, who is living in Miss Trotwood's home. Hoffmann alone equals Dickens in understanding the sudden excitements, sadnesses without a cause, and strange perversions of sensibility of such characters; in describing their disjointed thoughts and disconnected reasonings, the constant reappearance of some one word that breaks down any sentence they begin, and confuses what had begun to be a sensible observation; in seizing the senseless smile, the vacant look, the foolish and uneasy expression of these grown-up infants, painfully feeling about for thought after thought, and touching at every step upon the threshold of reality without the power of entering. The play of these dilapidated minds is painful, like the creaking of a door unhinged. A discordant laugh can be heard in it, if we listen for it; but it is easier to hear a groan and a complaint; and it is frightful to discern the lucidity, strangeness, exultation, and violence of an imagination that could create such beings and sustain their individuality throughout and with unfailing consistency, and that finds itself at home in the task of imitating and describing their unreason.

To what ob[illegible] this force directed? For imaginations [illegible] in their nature only, but in their object[illegible] [illegible]nated their power, we need r[illegible]. Within the whole wo[illegible]rial world for himself [illegible]he class of objec[illegible]xcite him;

he does not even perceive them. Dickens does not perceive things that are great; and this is the second quality which we are to note in his imagination. He is liable to become enthusiastic over anything, and particularly over common objects,—an old curiosity-shop; a sign; a public crier. He has vigor, but does not attain to the beautiful. His instrument produces vibrating tones, but not harmonious sounds. If he is to describe a house, he will draw it with even geometrical distinctness; he will bring out every color; he will find a physiognomy and thoughts even in the blinds and gutters; he will turn the building into a sort of human being, an energetic, grinning creature that we must needs gaze at and cannot forget. But he will not see the nobleness of long monumental lines, the calm majesty of broad shadows and their contrast with white surfaces, the joyful beauty of the lights that play across them and become palpable in the dark depths into which they plunge, as if to rest themselves and to sleep. If he is to describe a region of country, he will see the hawthorns whose red berries are sprinkled along the leafless hedges, the thin vapor that rises above a distant brook, the moving of an insect in the grass; but the large poetic qualities which would strike the author of "Valentine" and "André" will escape him. Like the painters of his country, he will be absorbed in observing little things minutely and intensely, but will not show a love of beautiful forms or beautiful colors. He will not see that blue and red, a straight line and a curve, suffice to form immense harmonies,

which, even among so many various differing details, maintain a large serenity, and open to the profoundest depths of the soul a fountain of health and happiness. But happiness is the very thing that he lacks. His inspiration is a feverish impulse which does not want to select its objects, but acts at random, upon what is ugly, vulgar, foolish; which breathes into its creations an abrupt and violent activity, but does not endow them with the harmonious well-being that another hand might have given. Ruth Pinch is an extremely pretty little housekeeper. She puts on her apron; what a treasure of an apron! Dickens turns it over and over, like a clerk in a ladies' fancy clothing store, trying to sell it. She takes it in her hand; she puts it round her waist; she ties the strings; she spreads it down; she taps it and rebukes it, and wheedles it, to make it set smoothly. There is hardly anything that she does not do with it. And how enchanted is the author during these innocent performances! He utters little cries of mischievous delight—"Heavens, what a wicked little apron!" He apostrophizes her ring; he frolics round her; he claps his hands with pleasure. The fabrication of the pudding is a great deal worse. Out of this he manufactures a whole scene, dramatic and lyric, with exclamations, introduction, catastrophes, as complete as a Greek tragedy. These kitchen prettinesses and archnesses recall the contrast of George Sand's pictures of interiors. For instance, the chamber of the flower-girl Geneviéve. She is making, like Ruth, something useful, that she is to sell next day for ten

sous. But this is a full-blown rose, whose delicate petals unclose under her fingers, as beneath a fairy's, whose fresh corolla is rosy with a vermilion as tender as that of her cheeks; a frail masterpiece, the blossom of an evening of poetic emotion passed in gazing from her window into the divine and penetrating eyes of the stars, and while the first breath of love is murmuring in the depth of her virgin heart. Dickens needs no such picture as this to inspire him. He can compose a dithyramb on a stage-coach. The wheels, the splashing mud, the crack of the whip, the clatter of the horses' feet, the rattle of the harness and the whole equipage, are enough to carry him quite away. He feels the very motion of the vehicle; it carries him off along with it; he hears the very gallop of the horses, and off he goes in an ode of several pages, which might be imagined played to us by the guard on his bugle.* All this, to inform us that Tom Pinch went to London! This lyric effusion, in which the most poetic conceits spring out of the most vulgar commonplace, like unhealthy flowers growing out of some old broken pot, illustrates the whole of Dickens's imagination. You might paint his portrait in the character of a person with a saucepan in one hand and a coach-whip in the other, in the act of prophesying.

2.

The reader has already foreseen that an imagination of this kind produces violent emotions. The manner of a man's conceptions determines his mode of feeling. Where the mind, only carelessly attending, follows the indistinct outlines of a sketch, it

* "Yoho," etc.—*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

receives only imperceptible impressions of pain or pleasure. But when with profound attention it penetrates all the minute details of an accurately-finished representation, the pain or pleasure that it receives take entire possession of it. Dickens has this attention; he sees these details; and thus he is able to find a source of excitement in anything. He never escapes from his impassioned tone; never seeks the repose of a natural style or a simple narrative. He is always making you either laugh or cry; he is always writing either satire or elegy. He has the feverish excitability of a woman who laughs aloud or bursts into tears at the sudden happening even of the most trifling occurrence. This passionate style is extremely powerful, and half the reputation of Dickens results from it. Ordinary men have only feeble emotions. We labor mechanically: we yawn a good deal; three-fourths of the things we see altogether fail to produce an impression on us. We doze in a set of habits, and at last cease to take any notice of the household scenes, the petty details, the ordinary experiences which constitute the main mass of our lives. All of a sudden there comes a man who makes those very things interesting; he even constructs dramas out of them; turns them into objects of admiration, of tenderness, of terror. Without leaving our fireside, without getting out of the omnibus, we find ourselves trembling, or our eyes full of tears, or seized with a fit of inextinguishable laughter. We are transformed; our life is doubled; our souls are set a-growing; we find that we feel, that we suffer, that we love. The excite-

ment is increased again by the contrast, the swift succession, the number of the sentiments crowded upon us; we are hurried along for two hundred pages upon a torrent of new emotions, crossing and conflicting; the flood infects us with its own violence; we are flung along with it into eddies and rapids, and at last are cast ashore, enchanted and exhausted. It is an intoxication, and the experience is too violent for a delicate mind. It suits the public, however, and their approbation has justified its use.

This kind of sensibility produces one or the other of two effects: laughter or tears. There are other effects, but they are to be produced only by an elevated eloquence. They belong to what is called the sublime; and we have seen that to Dickens this is an inaccessible region. But no author has known better how to touch and affect the feelings. He literally makes us weep; until we have read him, we do not know how much pity there is in our hearts. The sorrow of a child who wants his father to love him, but whose father does not love him; the hopeless love and slow death of a poor, half-witted young man; all such pictures of secret griefs leave an indelible impression. The tears which they call out are genuine,—they come from compassion exclusively. Balzac, George Sand, Stendhal, have told stories of human misery—is it possible to be a romancer without telling them? But they did not go to look for them; they simply met with them. They did not take pains to display them to us; they simply went their way, and as they went, they found these stories. It was love of art

rather than of humanity that actuated them. Their pleasure came from observing the play of the passions, from combining successions of events, from describing powerful characters; they write, not from sympathy with the wretched, but from love of the beautiful. When you lay down "Mauprat," your emotion is not sympathy only. You also feel a profound admiration for the greatness and generosity of love. When you have read "Le Père Goriot," you are heart-broken with the torments it describes: but the astonishing power of invention it shows, its accumulation of facts, the abundance of its general ideas, its power of analysis, carry you into the world of science, and your painful sympathy is relieved by the interest of this exhibition of the physiology of the heart. But Dickens never relieves our sympathy. He makes choice of subjects that call it all out, and with unequalled intensity; the long-continued oppression of children tyrannized over and starved by their schoolmaster; the life of the operative Stephen Blackpool, robbed and dishonored by his wife, ostracized by his comrades, himself charged with theft, languishing for six days at the bottom of a pit into which he has fallen, wounded, exhausted by fever, and just dying, when at last help reaches him. Rachel, his only friend, is present; and her terror, her cries, the whirlwind of despair in which Dickens knows how to envelope his personages, form an introduction for the painful picture of that resigned death. The bucket that has been lowered has brought up a form crushed almost out of humanity. We see the face, pale, exhausted, patient, turned to the heavens,

while the right hand, broken and hanging helpless, seems to seek for some other hand to hold it. The sufferer smiles, and feebly asks for "Rachel." She comes to him, and bending over him, her eyes come between his and the heaven, for he is unable to turn his head to look at her. Then, in broken speech, he tells her of his long agony. Indeed, ever since he was born, he has experienced only misery and injustice; but such is the law; the feeble suffer; they are made for suffering. The pit into which he fell has been the death of hundreds of men—fathers, husbands, sons, the supports of hundreds of families. The miners have petitioned parliament for God's sake to prevent their occupation from being their death; to save them for the sake of their wives and children, whom they love as much as gentlemen do theirs; but all in vain. While the pit was being worked, it killed men, and unnecessarily; when abandoned, it kills them still. Stephen tells all this without anger—calmly, simply, merely as narrating truths. His slanderer is present before him, but he feels no anger, accuses no one; he only charges his father to contradict the slander as soon as he is dead. His heart is already above, in the sky, where he sees a star shining. In the midst of his torment, on his bed of stones down in the pit, he has been looking up at it; and its tender, touching gaze, mystic and serene, has calmed the anguish of his mind and of his body.*

* "'It ha' shined upon me,' he said reverently, 'in my pain and trouble down below. It ha' shined into my mind,'" etc.—*Hard Times.*

And it is this same writer who is the most satirical, the most comic, the most of a buffoon, of all English writers! A strange gayety! Yet it is the only gayety that accords with his impassioned sensibility. There is a laughter which borders closely on tears. Satire is the sister of elegy. If one pleads for the oppressed, the other attacks the oppressors. Vexed at evils and vices, Dickens avenges himself by ridicule—his purpose being, not to describe them, but to punish them. Nothing could be more overwhelming than his long chapters of sustained irony, whose sarcasm thrusts his victim through and through, more and more mordant and piercing at every line. He has five or six such chapters directed against the Americans, aimed at their mercenary newspapers, their drunken newspaper men, their swindling speculators, their female writers, their vulgarity, familiarity, insolence, brutality—chapters that might ravish an absolutist, and would justify the liberalist traveller who, on returning from New York and landing at Havre, embraced with tears of joy the first gendarme he met. The organization of business corporations, the interviews of a member of parliament with his constituents, the member's instructions to his private secretary, the parade used in great banking houses, the laying of a corner-stone—all the ceremonials and falsities of English society—are painted with the force and bitterness of a Hogarth. There are passages whose sarcasm is so keen that it seems like a personal vengeance. There is such a one in the account of Jonas Chuzzlewit. The first word which that excellent young man learned to

spell was "gain." The first, again, after he got into words of two syllables, was "money." This judicious education had, as it happened, occasioned two inconveniences—one, that having been accustomed by his father to deceive others, he gradually got into the way of deceiving his father; the other, that having been trained to look at everything as a question of money, he had come to regard his father also as a sort of piece of property, whose most suitable place of deposit would be in that species of strong-box called a coffin.

"Is that my father a-snoring?" asks Mr. Jonas; and finding that it is, he proceeds: "Tread upon his foot, will you be so good? The foot next you is the gouty one."

His first appearance is in this little act of attention; and it is a specimen of all the rest. Dickens is in reality as melancholy as Hogarth; but like him he excites to violent laughter, by the buffoonery of his conceits and extravagance of his caricature. He carries his personages on into actual absurdity, with an intrepidity which is very rare. His Pecksniff indulges in moral speeches and sentimental actions as grotesque as they are extravagant. No such oratorical monstrosities were ever heard of. Sheridan had already represented an English hypocrite, Joseph Surface; but the character differs from Pecksniff as much as a portrait of the eighteenth century differs from one of the illustrations in *Punch*. Dickens has made his hypocrisy so defined, so monstrous, that the hypocrite no longer seems a man; he is as fantastic as those figures whose nose

is larger than the rest of their body. This extravagance comes from excess of imagination; the same faculty that Dickens makes use of everywhere. In rendering more plain what he describes, he strains the eyes of the beholder. Yet the reader finds amusement in this lawless vigor. The force of the execution makes him forget the improbability of the picture. He laughs heartily when Mr. Mould the undertaker enumerates the consolations which filial piety (well supplied with money) can obtain in his establishment. What grief would not be assuaged by four horses to each vehicle, velvet trappings, drivers in cloth cloaks and top boots, the plumage of the ostrich, dyed black, walking attendants dressed in the first style of funeral fashion, and carrying batons tipped with brass? "Oh! do not let us say that gold is dross, when it can buy such things as these, Mrs. Gamp!"—"How much consolation may I—even I," cried Mr. Mould, "have diffused among my fellow-creatures by means of my four long-tailed prancers, never harnessed under ten pound ten!"

Most usually, Dickens retains a grave manner in executing his caricatures. English wit says the most absurd things in a solemn manner. Thus the manner and the thoughts are contrasted; and contrasts always make strong impressions. These are what Dickens loves to produce, and his readers to experience.

When on occasion he is not occupied with castigating his neighbor, but essays to amuse him, his sportive vein is not his most successful one. The basis of the English character is unhappiness (manque de

bonheur). The ardent and tenacious imagination of Dickens seizes upon things with too strong a hold to glide lightlyand gayly over them. It impinges upon them; penetrates into them; goes through and through them; searches about within them. And these forcible operations are efforts; these efforts are attended with pain. To treat things enjoyingly, one must be as frivolous as a Frenchman of the eighteenth century; or as sensual as an Italian of the sixteenth; must either not trouble one's self about them, or must simply laugh at them. Dickens applies himself to them with solicitude; and does not simply laugh at them. Take, for instance, such a petty comic incident as anybody may see in the street; a gust of wind that disarranges the apron of a ticket-porter. Scaramouche would simply make a good-humored grimace at it; Le Sage would give an amused smile; both would pass on and think no more about it. But Dickens dwells on it for a whole half-page. He sees so accurately every effect of the wind, he throws his own personality so completely into it, he endows it with a will so living and passionate, he makes it whirl and fling about the poor fellow's clothes so furiously and so long, he developes the gust of wind into such a tempest and such a persecution, that we grow dizzy, and even while we laugh, we feel too much uneasiness and confusion to laugh heartily.*

Perhaps this imagination, so powerful, so definite, so violent, so passionately fixed upon its object, so

* "And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stormy-toed, tooth-chattering place it was," etc.—*The Chimes.*

deeply moved by little things, so singularly drawn to the details and sentiments of every-day life, so incessantly fruitful of emotions, so powerful in arousing painful pity in sarcasm and in nervous gayety, might be pictured by imagining a single glance at a London street in a rainy winter evening. The flaring, dazzling gas-light, streaming through the shop-windows, shines upon the faces that pass, and its harsh brilliancy, gleaming upon their drawn faces, throws out with infinite detail and in unpleasant clearness wrinkles, deformities, and painful expressions. If amidst the hurrying and dirty crowd you distinguish the fresh face of a young girl, the artificial light gives it an exaggerated and false coloring, and displays it upon the cold and wet and darkness, within a strange aureole. We are startled and astonished; we put our hands up to our eyes to shut out the glitter of the light, whose strength we admire; and we involuntarily contrast it with sunlight in the country, and the tranquil beauty of the day.

II. THE PUBLIC.

Establish the talent which we have thus described in such a country as England, and the literary opinions of the country will direct its growth and account for its results. This literary public opinion is the private opinion of such a mind; it is not endured, as an external constraint, but is perceived as if it were a part of itself. It does not embarrass such a mind, but developes it, and stimulates it to repeat aloud what has thus been softly whispered to it.

The counsels of this public opinion, which will

have the more weight because they coincide with the natural tendency of our author, will be as follows:

"Be moral. All your romances must be such as young girls can read. We are practical here, and we will not allow our literature to corrupt our actual life. Our religion is eminently a religion of the family; our literature must not paint passions which threaten the family state. We are Protestants; and we still have something of the severe sentiments of our ancestors in respect to joy and passion. Among the passions, that of love is the worst. Be careful to avoid any likeness in your treatment of this to the most distinguished of your neighbors. Love is the central personage of all the romances of George Sand. Whether married or unmarried, she cares little; she believes it beautiful, holy, and sublime in itself, and she says so. Do not believe this; or if you believe it, do not say it. It would have a bad influence. Love, if treated in this way, sinks marriage to a subordinate position. It may produce a marriage, or break one up, or proceed without one, as the case may be; but in any case it puts it in an inferior place; recognizes in it no sanctity but such as is derived from itself, and believes it impious without itself. A romance on this principle is an argument on behalf of the heart and the imagination; in behalf of enthusiasm, of nature; but it is frequently an argument against society and against the laws; and we will not permit any interference with society and the laws, either less or more. To treat a feeling as divine, to make all intuitions give way to it, to associ-

ate it with all manner of generous actions, to sing as with some heroic inspiration the combats which it goes through and the assaults which it sustains, to enrich it with all the resources of eloquence, to crown it with all the flowers of poetry,—this is to delineate the life that depends upon it as more beautiful and more elevated than other lives; to place it far above all other passions and duties, in a region of sublimity, on a throne where it shines like a sun; to make it a consolation and a hope, to attract all hearts to it. All this may be true of the artist life, but it is not true of the life of common men. Possibly it may be in accordance with nature, but we make nature yield to the requirements of society. George Sand describes women who are passionate; do you give us women who are respectable. She makes us wish to love; do you make us wish to marry.

"No doubt, these prescriptions may have their inconveniences; but art may be left to suffer, if the public interests gain by it. Though your characters should possess a lesser artistic value in proportion as they set better examples, you will be resigned to this result in consideration that you will succeed in being moral. Your lovers will be lifeless; for strength of passion is the only feature in lovers that is interesting, and you are not to paint passion. In 'Nicholas Nickleby,' two respectable young men, who are like all other young men, marry two respectable young women, who are like all other young women. In 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' two other respectable young men, just like the two first, marry

two other respectable young women, just like the two first. In 'Dombey and Son,' there is only one respectable young man, and one respectable young woman, but no other difference; and so on. You have an astonishing number of marriages; enough to people all England. And what is still more curious, they are all disinterested; the young men and young women despise money with as much sincerity as on the boards of the *Opéra Comique*. You will enlarge to any extent upon the pretty embarrassments of the betrothed pair, the tears of the mothers, the weeping of the whole company, the delightful and touching scenes of the dinner-table. You will compose a quantity of family groups, all as affecting and almost as agreeable as the paintings on fire-screens. The reader will be moved; he will think himself a spectator of the innocent loves and virtuous attentions of a little boy and girl ten years old; he will feel like saying to them, My good little friends, always be good. But you will be principally interesting to young girls, who will learn from you how a lover should make his court in a manner at once assiduous and entirely proper. If you venture upon a seduction, as in 'David Copperfield,' you will not display the progress, the ardor, the intoxications of the amour, but only the misery, the despair, the remorse. If, as in 'Copperfield' and 'The Cricket on the Hearth,' you describe a matrimonial trouble and a suspected wife, you will make haste to restore peace to the family and innocence to the lady, and will deliver by her mouth a eulogium on marriage magnificent enough to be a model to M. Émile Augier. If,

as in 'Hard Times,' a wife goes to the very verge of wrong-doing, she is to stop short at the verge. If, as in 'Dombey and Son,' she elopes from the conjugal abode, she is to remain pure, she is to be guilty of no crime, except in appearance, and she is to treat her lover in such a way that you would much prefer to be her husband. If, as in 'Copperfield,' you represent the troubles and follies of love, you are to be jocular over the love-affair that is thus handled; to be sure and show all its pettinesses; in substance, to excuse yourself to your reader. You are never to allow utterance to the ardent, generous, undisciplined voice of an all-powerful passion; it is to be managed as a plaything for good children, or a desirable ornament for married people. In representing marriage, however, you can find something to compensate you. Your genius for observation and your taste for details may be exercised on the scenes of domestic life. You will excel in describing a fire-side picture, a family conversation, children on their mother's lap, a husband at work by lamp-light at the side of his sleeping wife, his heart full of happiness and courage, because he is laboring for his dear ones. Your women will be impressive or charming; such as Dora, still a young girl, though she is married, whose little poutings, pretty ways, childish actions and laughter, enliven the household like the twitterings of a bird; or Esther, whose perfect goodness and divine innocence are unsoiled either by trials or by time; or Agnes, so calm, so patient, so sensible, so pure, so respectable,—a perfect model of a wife, and meriting

in her single self all the respect which is due to the married state. And when you shall attempt to set forth the attractions of conjugal duty, the nobility of conjugal friendship, the strength of a sentiment cultivated by ten years of confidence, helpfulness, and mutual devotion, your sensibilities, so long restrained, shall inspire you with an eloquence as pathetic as the warmest expressions of passion.*

"But the worst novels are not those which glorify love. To venture as far as our neighbors have ventured, we must live on the other side of the Channel. With us, there are some who admire Balzac, but nobody who would tolerate him. Some claim that he is not immoral; but everybody knows that always and everywhere he leaves morality out of the account. George Sand has celebrated but one passion: Balzac has celebrated them all. He has treated them as forces; and believing that force is good, he has deduced them from their causes, placed their circumstances around them, developed their effects, carried them out to their extremes, enlarged them into a species of sublime monsters, more consistent and more true than the very truth itself. But here we do not admit that any man may reduce himself to an artist and nothing more. We do not choose him to separate himself from his conscience, to leave the practical results of his work out of the question. We will never allow that this very trait is the principal characteristic of our own Shakspeare; we will not confess that, like Balzac, he carries his heroes

* "David Copperfield," in the scene between Dr. Strong and his wife.

into crimes and into monomaniacs; that like him he dwells in the region of pure logic and pure imagination. We have greatly changed since the sixteenth century; at present, we condemn much which in former years we approved. We do not wish the reader to become interested in a miser, an ambitious person, a debauchee. He will, however, be interested in him, if the author, neither praising nor blaming, occupies himself in explaining the temperament and education of his subject, and the form of brain, the habits of mind, which have reinforced his natural tendency; in showing how necessary were the results of such a character, in following it through all the phases of its experience, in painting the increased strength which years and indulgence give it, in showing the irresistible downfall which plunges a man into madness or death. The reader who is captivated by the logic of this method, admires the results of its operations, and forgets to be angry at the personage himself who is created. What a capital miser! he exclaims, but does not trouble himself about the evil consequences of avarice. He becomes a philosopher and an artist, and forgets that he is a respectable citizen. Always remember, however, that you are one; and renounce all the beauties that require such a corrupt soil to flourish in.

"Among these beauties, grandeur is the foremost. One must be interested in the passions in order to understand their whole extent, to reckon up all their springs, to describe their whole course. They are like diseases. If you confine yourself to speaking against them, you will never come to understand

them. If you do not deal with them as a physiologist, if you do not actually feel a love for them, if you do not make them your heroes, if, for instance, you are not delighted to discover a fine trait of avarice, as a physician would be in discovering some precious symptom; you can never map out their whole vast system, nor display their fatal grandeur. You are not to endeavor after this immoral kind of merit, and moreover, it is not suited to the character of your mind. Your extreme sensibility, your ever ready irony, must find employment. You are not calm enough to penetrate to the very bottom of a character. You prefer either to be affected by it or to be jocular with it. You take sides with regard to it at any rate; you make it either your enemy or your friend; you render it odious or touching. Still you do not paint a likeness of it; you are too passionate, and not enough inquisitive. On the other hand, the tenacious quality of your imagination, the force and concentration with which your thoughts penetrate into the details which you desire to apprehend, operate to limit your knowledge, confine you to some single trait, prevent you from exploring every part, from sounding all the depths of a soul. Your imagination is too vivid, but not large enough. What you can execute, then, is this: you can seize upon some one attitude of a character, can see nothing else in him, and can keep it unchanged from beginning to end of the work. His face will always have the same expression, and that expression will almost always be some grimace. Each of your personages will have some trick or other,

which will never be absent. Mercy Pecksniff will laugh at every word; Mark Tapley, under all sorts of circumstances, will repeat his watchword of 'Jolly;' Mrs. Gamp will be incessantly talking of Mrs. Harris; the apothecary, Mr. Chillip, will do nothing that will not be stamped with timidity; Mr. Micawber will be uttering one and the same sort of emphasized phrases through three volumes, and five or six times he will pass with a ludicrous brusqueness from joy to grief. Each of your characters shall be the incarnation of some one vice or virtue or absurdity; and whatever the quality that you give him, its display shall be so prequent, so invariable, so exclusive, that he shall seem not so much like a living man as an abstraction dressed up in man's clothes. The French have a Tartufe who is a hypocrite, like your Mr. Pecksniff; but his hypocrisy has not destroyed the rest of his being. If his vice serves the purpose of the comedy, his nature as a whole entitles him to a place among human beings. Besides his single grimace he has a character, a temperament. He is big, strong, red, brutal, sensual. The vigor of his blood gives him audacity; his audacity gives him repose; his audacity, his repose, his quickness of decision, his contempt for other men, make him a great politician. After he has engaged the attention of the public through five acts, there is still more than one question left to be examined by the psychologist and the physician. But your Pecksniff will offer nothing for either of them to consider. He will serve only to instruct and amuse the public.

He will be a living satire on hypocrisy—nothing more. If you add a liking for brandy, it will be a gratuitous addition, for nothing in the temperament which you will give him will require it. He is so buried in his tartuffery, in his smooth manner, his fine observations, his studied phrases, his mawkish morality, that the rest of his nature has disappeared. He is a mask, not a man. But the mask is so grotesque and so forcibly painted that it will serve its purpose of public usefulness, and will diminish the number of hypocrites. That is what we require of it, and what you require; and the whole series of your characters, in like manner, will have rather the effect of a book of satires than of a gallery of portraits.

"In consequence of this same state of things, these satires, though they form a collection, will remain in reality separate, and will not constitute any really symmetrical whole. You began your career with sketches, and your romances are nothing but sketches fastened to each other one after another. The only way in which a natural and compact whole can be constructed is to give the history of one passion or one character at a time; to begin at its birth, to follow it as it grows, changes, and perishes, to seize and represent the interior necessity which governs its development. You follow no such development; you maintain your personage always in the same attitude. He is miser or hypocrite or good, from beginning to end, and always exactly in the same way. He, therefore, has no history. You can only change the circumstances in which you place him,

but not himself. He is immovable, and no matter in how many different ways he is played upon, he always gives back the same note. The different events which you contrive are, accordingly, only an amusing phantasmagoria; they have no necessary thread of connection, form no system; they are piled in a heap. You only write lives, adventures, memoirs, sketches, collections of scenes; you do not know how to compose an action. But while the literary taste of your nation, along with the natural tendency of your genius, subject you to limitations in respect of morality, prohibit you from representing characters in a grand style, and forbid you from creating works possessed of completeness of structure, still they offer for your powers of observation, your sensibility, and your satire, a series of original characters that could exist nowhere but in England —whose representations, executed by your hand, will constitute a unique gallery of portraits—and which, together with the record of your own genius, will exhibit that of your country and your times."

III. THE CHARACTERS.

Omitting the grotesque characters, whose business is only to complete groups and to be laughed at, it will be found that all the characters of Dickens fall into two classes—those who have good sense and those who have not. He contrasts the minds which are formed by nature with those which are deformed by society. One of his later romances, "Hard Times," is a summary of all the rest. In it he ex-

alts instinct above reason, the intuitions of the heart above practical knowledge. He attacks that education which is based on statistics, figures, and facts; he heaps sorrows and ridicule on the practical people, the mercantile people; he fights against the pride, the hardness, the selfishness of the merchant and the noble; he curses the manufacturing towns, with their smoke and mud, that imprison the bodies of the operatives in an artificial atmosphere, and their souls in a factitious way of living. He searches out poor workmen, jugglers, a foundling; in them he concentrates good sense, generosity, delicacy, courage, sweetness of disposition, and with these good qualities he confounds the pretended knowledge, the pretended happiness, the pretended virtue of the rich and the powerful who despise them. He makes satires on social oppressors, and elegies on the oppressed; and both his elegiac and his satirical genius find at hand, in their English surroundings, all the conditions required for their successful display.

1.

The first result of English society is hypocrisy. It ripens in the combined breath of religion and morality; and we know what is the empire of those influences north of the Channel. In a country where it is a scandal to laugh on Sunday, where the gloom of Puritanism has retained something of its ancient opposition to happiness, where critical students of ancient history write dissertations on the virtues of Nebuchadnezzar, it is natural that a

moral exterior should be found useful. It is a sort of currency that is indispensable. Those who have not the genuine article get up a counterfeit; and the more valuable the real thing is reckoned by public opinion, the more it is counterfeited. The vice is an English one. Mr. Pecksniff is not to be found in France. His talk would disgust us. If we have an affectation, it is of vice, not of virtue. If we would be popular, we must not parade our principles, but rather confess our weaknesses; if there are charlatans among us, they are those who make a boast of immorality. There was a time when we had our hypocrites, but it was when religion was popular. Since Voltaire's day, Tartufe has been impossible. No one tries any longer to affect a piety which would deceive nobody and would lead to nothing. Hypocrisy comes, goes, and varies with manners, religion, and culture; and, accordingly, we find the hypocrisy of Pecksniff conforming to the characteristics of his countrymen. English religion has little of the dogmatic, and is of a moral tendency throughout. Pecksniff, accordingly, does not utter theological phrases like Tartufe, but pours out philanthropic tirades. He has kept pace with the age; has become a humanitarian philosopher; has named his daughters Mercy and Charity. He is tender and kind, and liable to be overpowered by effusions of domestic affection. When visitors come, he innocently allows charming pictures of family life to be visible; he shows off a fatherly heart, the sentiments of a good husband, the kindness of a good master. As it is the domestic virtues which

are particularly honored at present, he selects them for his deceitful garment. Orgon, under the instructions of Tartufe, says he would, under certain conditions, calmly behold the destruction of parents, wife, and children. The modern form of virtue, the English form of piety, feel otherwise. The remembrance of another world must not influence us to despise this one, but to improve it. Tartufe, accordingly, talks about his hair shirt and his scourge; Pecksniff of his comfortable little parlor, the charms of domestic happiness, the beauties of nature. He seeks to preserve good-will among men; he might be a member of the Peace Society; he makes the most touching observations about the benefits and beauties of harmony. Nobody can listen to him without being affected. In our day, people are refined; they have read a good deal of elegiac poetry; their sensibilities are all alive; they cannot now be imposed upon by the coarse impudence of a Tartufe. So Mr. Pecksniff's manner is that of a sublime long-suffering; smiles of ineffable compassion; impulses; irresistible movements; graces and tenderness which are to reduce the hardest hearts, to charm the most delicate. The English, in their parliamentary assemblies, in their meetings, associations, and public ceremonials, have acquired the habitude of oratorical delivery, the use of abstract terms, a style of political economy, a newspaper style, and a prospectus style. That of Mr. Pecksniff is the prospectus style; with its obscurity, its verbosity, and its pompousness. He seems to float above this lower world, in a region of pure

ideas, in the very bosom of ideal truth. He is like an apostle who has been trained in the *Times* office. He utters general ideas on all occasions. He deduces a moral lesson from the beefsteak that he has been eating. That beefsteak has passed away; the things of this world must pass away. Let us remember how frail we are, and think of the account which we must one day render.

As he refolds his napkin, he rises to reflections of much grandeur.* We discover in all this a new species of hypocrisy. Vices change from one age to another, as virtues do.

A practical tendency, as well as a moral one, characterizes the English. By experience in commerce, in manufactures, in self-government, that nature has contracted a taste and a talent for business; and it is from this that they have derived their habit of looking upon us as children, and as foolish. But this disposition, if pushed to excess, becomes the destruction of imagination and sensibility. The man becomes a speculating machine, full of nothing but figures and facts; he disbelieves in intellect and in heart; the world contains nothing but profit and loss; he grows harsh, bitter, greedy, avaricious; he treats men like so many parts of machinery; he turns into something that is only a merchant, or banker, or statistician, which has ceased to be a man. Dickens has produced many pictures of such business men; Ralph Nickleby, Scrooge, Antony

* "The process of digestion, as I have been informed by anatomical friends, is one of the most wonderful works of nature," etc. —*Martin Chuzzlewit.*

Chuzzlewit, his son Jonas, Alderman Cute, Mr. Murdstone and his sister, Mr. Bounderby, Mr. Gradgrind. He has such characters in all his romances. Some of them are such by training, some by nature; but they are all hateful, for, all alike, they aim to sneer at and to destroy goodness, sympathy, compassion, disinterested affection, religious emotion, imaginative enthusiasm, all that is beautiful in humanity. They oppress children, they beat women, they starve the poor, they insult the miserable. The best of them are polished steel automata which go methodically through their legal duties without any consciousness that they are making others suffer. In our own country no such beings are to be found. Their rigidity is no part of our character. In England, they are the product of a school, which has its philosophy, its great men, its glory; but which has never been established among us. Our writers have, it is true, often painted misers, business men, shopkeepers; Balzac is full of them. But he makes their traits a result of imbecility, or else he draws such singular monstrosities as Grandet and Gobseck. Those of Dickens, however, represent an actual class of men, an actual natural vice. Read the passage in "Hard Times," where Mr. Gradgrind explains his views to the schoolmaster,* and judge whether Mr. Gradgrind is not body and soul an Englishman.

Another fault, pride, is the result of a habit of commanding, and of contending. It abounds in an

* "Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts," etc.—*Hard Times.*

aristocratic country like England: and no man has satirized the aristocracy more than Dickens. All his pictures of men of this class are sarcasms. There is James Harthouse, a dandy, disgusted with everything, and with himself most of all, and quite right too; Lord Frederick Verisopht, a poor silly dupe, brutalized with drink, whose chief trait is staring fixedly at people while he sucks the head of his cane; Cousin Feenix, a sort of machine that utters parliamentary phrases, but whose works are out of order, and who finds it almost impossible to complete any of the ridiculous sentences that he is all the time beginning; Mrs. Skewton, a hideous, broken-down old woman, coquettish even to her death-bed, who asks for rose-colored curtains in her last agony, and who parades her daughter through all the drawing-rooms of England to sell her to some rich husband; Sir John Chester, a respectable scoundrel, who for fear of compromising himself refuses to save the life of his own natural son, doing so with infinite grace, as he finishes his cup of chocolate. But the completest and most English of all these portraits of aristocracy is that of Mr. Dombey, the London merchant.

In France, we do not go into country-houses for aristocratic types, but there are such in England, and as pronounced as in the proudest of our *châteaux*. Mr. Dombey, like a nobleman, loves his House as himself. If he despises his daughter and desires a son, it is in order to perpetuate the ancient name of his House. He has commercial ancestors, he desires commercial descendants. He has traditions to sustain;

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silence on his sister, on his friends; he receives his guests with his usual manner, with his accustomed coldness. With despair in his heart, devoured by his consciousness of the insult and the defeat he has suffered, and by the idea of the laughter of the public, he remains as firm, as haughty, as calm, as ever. He is even more audacious than before in pushing the enterprise of his business; and at last he ruins himself. He is about to commit suicide.

Up to this point everything has been correct, the bronze statue was entire, unconquered. But the exigencies of moral public opinion now pervert the proceedings of the artist. The daughter comes in, just in time. She supplicates, he is prevailed with; she coaxes him away; he becomes the best of fathers—and a fine romance is spoiled.

2.

If we look through the roll of personages once more, we shall find, contrasted with these artificial and evil characters which have been produced by the natural intuitions, a class of good ones, such as nature produces, and of these the children rank highest.

There are none such in French literature. The Joash of Racine had to be introduced in a piece composed for the girls of the seminary of Saint-Cyr. And even then, the poor child is made to talk in the fashion of a king's son, in a lofty style learned by heart, as if he were reciting out of a catechism. Now-a-days, the only characters of this sort that we have are those described in juvenile books, as models for good children. Dickens has drawn his portraits

of children as if with a peculiar satisfaction. He has not been trying to edify the public, and he has charmed it. He has made them all remarkably sensitive; they are very loving, and they require to be loved. To understand these feelings in the artist, and this selection of characters, we must observe the physical type which he gives them. Their color is so fresh, their complexion so delicate, their flesh so transparent, their blue eyes so pure, that they are like beautiful flowers. It is not surprising that their author loves them, that he invests them with so much sensibility and innocence, that he describes such frail and lovely rosebuds as crushed under the rough hands that seek to deal with them. We need, too, to observe the homes in which they have been brought up. When the merchant or the clerk leaves his business at five o'clock, he hurries back to the pretty cottage where his children have been playing all day on the grass. The fireside where the evening is passed is a sanctuary; and their domestic endearments are the only poetry which they require. When a child is deprived of such affection, of such happiness, as this, it is as if he were deprived of the air he breathes; and a whole volume is none too large for the description of his sufferings. Dickens has filled a dozen with such descriptions, culminating in "David Copperfield." David was affectionately loved by his mother, and by a good maid-servant, Peggotty. With this last he plays in the garden, he watches her at her sewing, he reads her the natural history of crocodiles. He is afraid of the formidable fowls and geese which run about the

yard. He is perfectly happy. His mother marries a second time, and everything is changed. The stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, and his sister Jane, are harsh, methodical, stony. Poor little David is incessantly hurt by their cruel words. He is afraid to speak or to stir, for fear of making trouble for his mother; the cold looks of these new members of the family weigh him down as with a coat of lead. He withdraws into himself; studies mechanically the lessons set him; and is so afraid that he shall not learn them, that he cannot, and is whipped, and shut up alone, on bread and water. He is frightened in the night; he grows even afraid of himself; he tries to convince himself if he is really naughty and wicked; and he cries. This incessant fright, so helpless and hopeless, the picture of sensibility harshly used and of intelligence quenched, the long anxieties, the watches, the solitude, of the poor imprisoned boy, his passionate longing to embrace his mother or to cry in his nurse's arms—constitute a painful picture. These childish sufferings are as profound as those of a grown man. It is the story of a delicate plant, flourishing in a warm air and under a genial sun, transplanted all at once amongst snow and ice, fading and withering.

The common people, like the young, are dependent, uncultivated, the children of nature, liable to oppression. Of course, Dickens seeks to elevate them. This is no novelty in France. The romances of Eugène Sue afford more than one instance of it, and the theme is as old as Rousseau. But under the hands of the English author it has been treated with

singular power. His heroes are wonders of delicacy and devotion, all nobility and generosity. A mountebank gives up his daughter, his only delight, for fear that he shall in some way injure her. A young woman devotes herself to save the unworthy wife of a man whom she loves and who loves her; he dies, and, out of pure self-sacrifice, she continues to take care of the degraded creature. A poor carter who believes his wife false to him, openly declares her innocence, and seeks no vengeance except to overwhelm her with tenderness and kindness. None, according to Dickens, feel as fully as those of this condition in life, the happiness of loving and being loved, the pure joy of domestic life. None have so much compassion for the poor deformed and infirm beings to whom they so frequently give birth, and who seem born only to die. None have a more infallible or inflexible moral sense. I may even say that these heroes of Dickens's resemble rather too much the indignant father in a melodrama. When the elder Mr. Peggotty finds that his niece has been seduced, he sets out, staff in hand, and travels through France, Germany, and Italy, in order to find her and reform her. But above all, these personages have one English sentiment in which we are deficient. They are Christians. It is not the women only who, as with us, find comfort in thoughts of another world; the men do the same. In that country, where sects are so numerous, and where every one chooses his own, each has faith in the religious belief which he has selected; and the nobility of this sentiment elevates still higher the place where their

rectitude of purpose and delicacy of feeling have already enthroned them.

The romances of Dickens may really be expressed in one single phrase: Be good, and be loving; there is no real happiness but the feelings of the heart; its sensibilities are the whole of man. Leave science to the learned, pride to the noble, luxury to the rich. Pity the miseries of the lowly. The least and most despised human being may alone be equal in worth thousands of the proud and powerful. Beware of chilling the delicate souls which you are liable to meet in every rank, under all manner of garments, of all ages. Believe that humanity, pity, forgiveness, are the best qualities of man; that friendship, confidence, tenderness, tears, are the sweetest experiences of life. To live, is nothing; to be powerful, wise, illustrious, is little; to be useful even, is not enough. He only has lived, he only is a man, who has wept over the remembrance of a kindness done or received.

3.

We do not at all suppose that this contrast of the feeble with the strong, this appeal to nature as against society, are the caprice of an artist, or a mere accident. Trace as far as you will the history of the English mind, and you will find it founded in an impassioned sensibility, and expressing itself most naturally in an emotional manner and under lyric forms. Both trait and expression were derived from Germany, and characterize the literature of the time before the Conquest. They appear again, after an

interval, in the sixteenth century, after the predominance of the French literature imported from Normandy had passed by. They are the very soul of the nation. But the education of this soul has been opposed to its natural genius. Its history has contradicted its nature; its original tendency has struggled against all the great events which it has brought to pass or has undergone. The accidents of a victorious invasion and of an aristocracy imposed from without, while they laid the foundations of political liberty, impressed upon the nation a character of pride and combativeness. The accident of an insular position, the necessity of commerce, an abundance of the raw materials for industry, have developed their practical faculties and their materialist tendencies. These habits, these faculties, this mental character, together with the accident of an ancient hostility against Rome, and ancient resentment against an oppressive Church, have developed a proud and intellectual religion, which has substituted independence for submission, practical morality for poetical theology, and discussion for faith. Their politics, their business, and their religion, like three powerful mechanisms operating together, have formed, above the primitive individual, another, of a different kind. A stiff dignity, self-control, the sentiment of command, rigidity in commanding; a strict morality, without compromise or pity, a taste for figures and for dry reasoning, a dislike for all facts not palpable and for all ideas not useful, ignorance of the invisible world, contempt for weakness and tenderness —such are the characteristics which the course of

events and the influence of their institutions has tended to impress upon the English mind. But their poetry and their domestic life prove that this work has been only half done. The ancient sensibilities, though oppressed and distorted, are still alive and still active. There is a poet under the Puritan, under the merchant, under the statesman. The social man has not extinguished the natural man. That icy exterior, that unsocial arrogance, that stiff manner, often hide a kind and tender heart. The English mask hides German features; and when a writer of talent—who often rises into a writer of genius—reaches the sensibilities that lie chilled or buried under the national education and institutions, he moves the Englishman to the very depths of his being; he becomes the master of all hearts.